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# THE NEW YORKER

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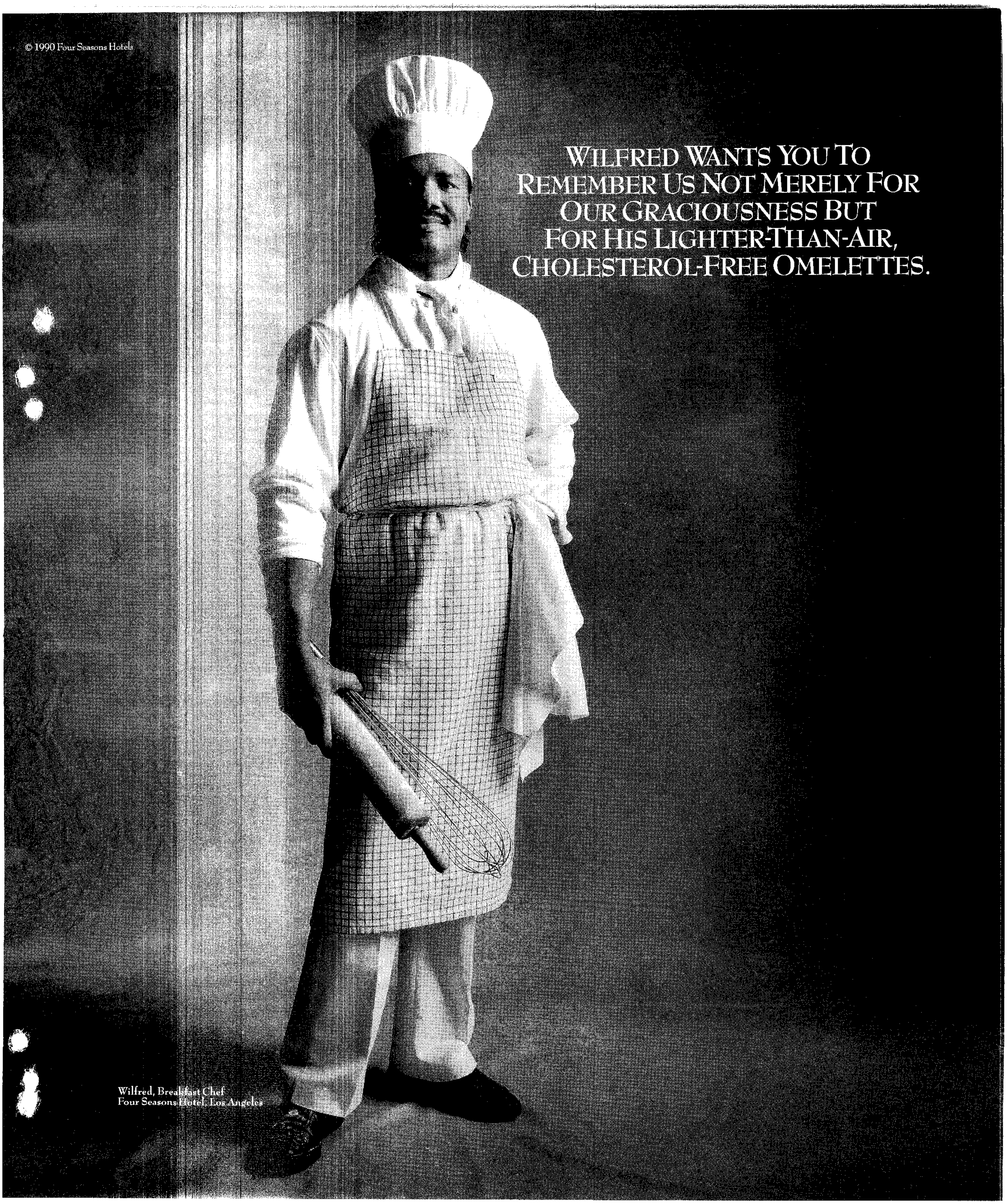
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# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

## THE THEATRE

AT the end of the table, someone is carving the Christmas gander, but you can't concentrate on the bird or its contents. Your mind is on another sort of stuffing—the plane ticket to London that was placed in your stocking alongside passes to the next Knicks game. The former gift naturally inspires thoughts of theatre. An agenda starts to take shape. You reject the idea of attending a holiday pantomime while abroad: English cross-dressing is a phenomenon you don't quite grasp. You similarly discard notions of taking in a musical: "Miss Saigon" will (probably) be in New York soon; this new show, "Children of Eden," smells too much like "Godspell" or that Shroud of Turin extravaganza of a few seasons ago; and you've seen everything else, except for a brand-new East-to-West-End transfer of "Five Guys Named Moe," which is built around the vintage songs of Louis Jordan. As for plays, you don't quite know where to turn, and so this fantasy is about to dissolve when, suddenly, the voice of your guardian angel pops into your brain. This isn't a full-time, "It's a Wonderful Life"-type of apparition. It globe-trots. It has just got back from trodding the boards in London, in fact, and is loaded with advice. The voice speaks up:

"Sondheimmania's eased somewhat over there, and now families are the thing: people don't want a play, they want a gene pool. The Redgraves—Vanessa, Lynn, and their niece Jemma—are in 'The Three Sisters.' They aim for comedy, and come up halfsies, but go, if you must. The Oliviers—Joan Plowright and her two daughters, Tamsin and Julie-Kate—have settled into a J. B. Priestley drama, 'Time and the Conways.' Time has not been kind to the Conways; time has not been kind to this play. The best sister act in town, really, is the fictional one depicted in Brian Friel's new play, 'Dancing at Lughnasa,' at the National. Five spinsters; a daft, priestly brother; the Irish countryside: simple and sublime. On another National stage, the versatile Nicholas Hytner and the pukka Alan Bennett have—poop, poop—conjured up 'The Wind in the Willows.' The show's a bit too eager to please, but full of marvels all the same." What if all this family-driven and family-oriented stuff, you interject, makes one hungry for Shakespeare? "You'll have to go to Stratford for that right now," the spirit replies, "and see—no, *hear*—Alex Jennings as Richard II: he speaks the verse like one of my colleagues. And if you stick around another day or two you can cap your expedition with 'The Seagull.' It's performed on a small stage, and directed by Terry Hands, whose superb ensemble led by Simon Russell Beale and Susan Fleetwood has depth to make those Knicks of yours weep with envy."

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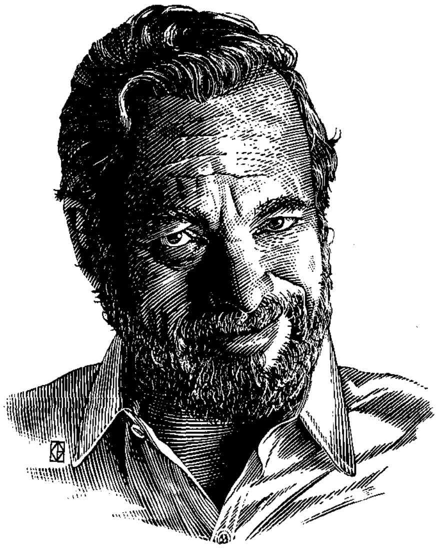
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | | | |

### OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

**ASSASSINS**—A new musical by Stephen Sondheim (score and lyrics) and John Weidman (book); directed by Jerry Zaks. The cast includes Victor Garber, Annie Golden, Jonathan Hadary, and Debra Monk. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

**CIRCLE REPERTORY COMPANY**—Presenting **LOVE DIATRIBE**, by Harry Kondoleon. Opens Dec. 18 at 8. (99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100.)



*Stephen Sondheim: "Assassins"*

**LIGHT OPERA OF MANHATTAN**—Presenting Victor Herbert's **BABES IN TOYLAND**. Opens Dec. 19 at 8, and runs through Dec. 31. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

**TOWNSHIP FEVER**—Mbongeni Ngema's new South African musical. Previews on Dec. 18. Opens Dec. 19 at 8. (Majestic, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 1-718 636-4100.)

**THE VOICE OF THE PRAIRIE**—A play by John Olive. Opens Dec. 17 at 7, and runs through Jan. 6. (Chelsea Stage, 441 W. 26th St. 760-9810.)

### RECENTLY OPENED

**THE AMERICAN PLAN**—A new play by Richard Greenberg, with Joan Copeland, Yvette Hawkins, D. W. Moffett, Wendy Makkena, and Jonathan Walker. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

**ASPECTS OF LOVE**—Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest extravaganza, based on David Garnett's frail 1955 novel of the same title, aspires to good taste and sophistication (it's about artists and theatre folk rather than cats or trains) but ends up being a monument to vulgarity. The combination of Garnett's triviality and Lloyd Webber's pretentiousness produces something so empty it implodes. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/23/90.) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

**THE BIG FUNK**—A new play written and directed by John Patrick Shanley. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

**BUDDY: THE BUDDY HOLLY STORY**—Anyone who thinks that rock and roll lives on had better steer clear of this ersatz docu-musical about the life of Buddy Holly. (11/19/90) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

**CAMILLE, A TEARJERKER**—Everett Quinton and the late Charles Ludlam are both at their best in this revival of Mr. Ludlam's 1973 spoof, which gives Mr. Quinton a chance to "play the whore" on a grand scale. (Charles Ludlam Theatre, 1 Sheridan Square. 691-2271.)

**CARNAL KNOWLEDGE**—That yesterday's cutting-edge social commentary turns up as today's after-school special seems the only conclusion to be drawn from this brat-pack production of the Jules Feiffer play, on which Mike Nichols based the 1971 movie. With Judd Nelson, Justine Bateman, and Jon Cryer (in the roles created by Jack Nicholson, Candice Bergen, and Art Garfunkel); directed by Martin Charnin. (12/10/90) (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.)

**THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE**—Brecht's play about the servant girl, Grusha, who rescues the child of a deposed governor during a palace uprising. George C. Wolfe's exhilarating staging—of a Thulani Davis adaptation—takes shameless liberties with the text, moving the story from the Caucasus to the Caribbean and lopping off the Marxist prologue. The result is a production that leaves you thinking about Brecht, class, motherhood, and political theatre in general, so go know. (12/17/90) (Public, 425 Lafayette [illegible]. 598-7150. Closes Dec. 23.)

**DAUGHERTY & FIELD OFF-BROADWAY**—The cabaret team of Bill Daugherty and Robin Field in a revue of swing and show tunes. (Double Image Theatre, 15 Vandam St. 924-1120.)

**FALSETTOLAND**—This latest installment of a three-part cantata by William Finn (music and lyrics) is a sequal to "In Trousers" and "March of the Falsettos." Mr. Finn's story presents a number of new elements (among them a Bar Mitzvah in the hospital room of a man who is dying of AIDS) before dissolving in its own syrup. The music sounds agreeable enough, and the performance goes smoothly, under the direction of James Lapine. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782.)

**FIDDLER ON THE ROOF**—The Israeli actor Topol makes a commanding Tevye, the best of all of them, in this production, which falls somewhere between revival and facsimile. The songs are by Bock and Harnick; the dances and direction are re-created from the Jerome Robbins originals; and the costumes are from the Patricia Zipprodt originals. (12/3/90) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 586-6510.)

**FOREVER PLAID**—Stuart Ross's loving, tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. The performances of Jason Graae, Stan Chandler, David Engel, and Guy Stroman (as the Plaids, a close-harmony group snuffed out in the prime of life and brought back to earth for a single evening) are so deadpan, and the songs (arranged by James Raitt) are rendered at such a heightened pitch of musical good faith, that only from Ross's script and choreography would you know the thing is a parody. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.)

**I STAND BEFORE YOU NAKED**—A new play by Joyce Carol Oates. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074. Closes Dec. 30.)

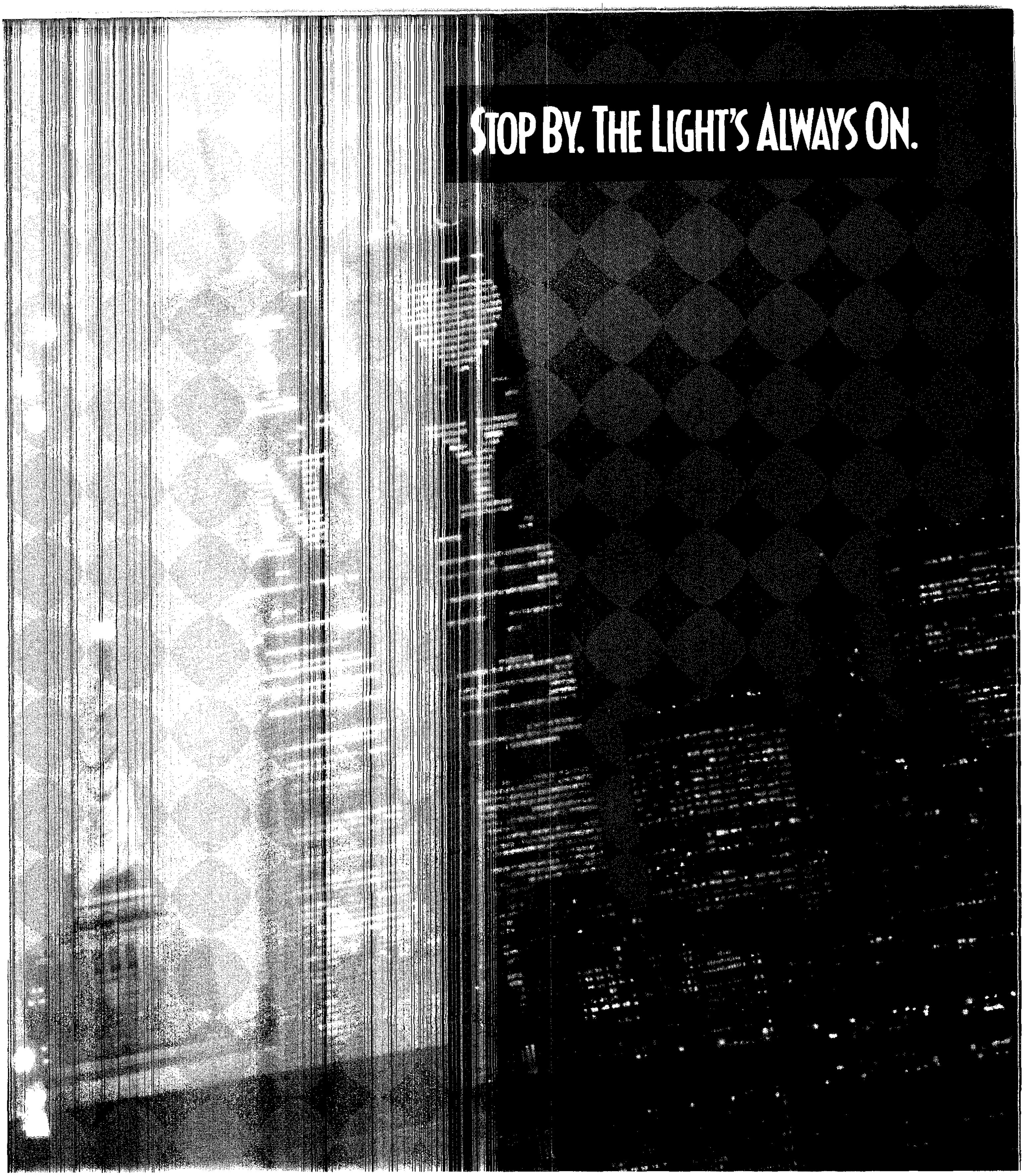
**JACKIE MASON: BRAND NEW**—The comedian brings his one-man show to Broadway again. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 246-0102.)

**JEAN COCTEAU REPERTORY**—Two plays in rotating repertory: Ibsen's **WHEN WE DEAD AWAKEN** and Cocteau's **INFERNAL MACHINE**. Performances resume Jan. 3. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

**LAKE NO BOTTOM**—The characters in Michael Weller's comedy are an eminent critic, now retired to his lakeside estate; his charming wife; and a suddenly succesful novelist who was once her lover. There is not much in the way of plot but quite a lot in the way of fun, as the *ménage* quickly becomes *à trois*, and the actors perform with spirit and relish. Marsha Mason is a star in a star's role, and she is supported (and then some) by Daniel Davis, as her husband, and Robert Knepper, as her lover. Carole Rothman directed, and Adrianne Lobel designed the stylish settings. (12/10/90) (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103. Closes Dec. 23.)

**LAMBS THEATRE COMPANY**—The annual presentation of **THE GIFTS OF THE MAGI**, a musical adapted from two O. Henry stories. (Lambs Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780. Closes Dec. 30.)

**LETTICE & LOVAGE**—The marvellous Maggie Smith play Lettice Douffet, a freewheeling guide to England's stately homes, and the elegant Margaret Tyzack plays a reprimanding envoy sent by Lettice's employers, in Peter Shaffer's merry comedy about an unlikely friendship and other matters. Paxton



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Whitehead and Bette Henritze are effective in supporting roles. Michael Blakemore was the director. (4/9/90) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 23.)

**Love and Anger**—George F. Walker's play about a formerly sleazy lawyer who decides (following a stroke) to spend the rest of his life doing good may be a lot better than the current production allows you to believe. Unfortunately, Saul Rubinek's performance as the lawyer is so dire, and James C. Nicola and Christopher Grabowski have directed so messily that the author's point is virtually indiscernible, in spite of some dapper acting by Steve Ryan, Arthur Hanket, and Deirdre O'Connell. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 279-4200. Closes Jan. 6.)

**The Miser**—This tiresome, simpleminded, infantile revival of the Molière classic is an almost total washout saved from ignominy only by a dashing comic turn by John Christopher Jones. The director, Stephen Porter, would seem to have found for the divine Philip Bosco a part he can do nothing with. (10/29/90) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 30.)

**Monster in a Box**—Spalding Gray's latest autobiographical monologue. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

**Nightingale**—Elizabeth Diggs' drama about England's heroine of the Crimea plays like a cross between one of those "Masterpiece Theatre" pageants about famous people and a Young Adult biography. It has a good cast and elegant staging (by John Rubinstein), but nothing can alter the fact that the play amounts to hagiography of the dullest kind. With Kathryn Pogson, Pippa Pearthree, and Sloane Shelton. (12/17/90) (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874. Closes Dec. 23.)

**Oh, Kay!**—A joyous revival of a musical originally done here in 1926, this time with an all-black (all-gifted) company. The score, by George Gershwin, with lyrics by Ira Gershwin, and the singing and nimble dancing of the whole company are so glorious that they nearly compensate for the damnable din of amplification. With Brian Mitchell and Angela Teek as the romantic leads, and with fleet-footed Gregg Burge, Kevin Ramsey, and Stanley Wayne Mathis as the principal dancers. (11/12/90) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.)

**Once on This Island**—A musical by Lynn Ahrens (book and lyrics) and Stephen Flaherty (score). Based on a novel by Rosa Guy. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

**Peter Pan**—Cathy Rigby has the title role in a production of the 1954 musical. (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 246-0102.)

**The Piano Lesson**—August Wilson's newest drama, the fourth in his series chronicling the black-American experience in the twentieth century, is set in Pittsburgh, in 1936. In its exquisite writing and over-all structure (involving the conflict over a piano that figures hauntingly and intricately in one family's history) the play resembles "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" more than "Fences." Wilson takes refuge in an overly mystical and melodramatic ending, but there are some great scenes. Lloyd Richards was the director. (4/30/90) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 582-4022.)

**Prelude to a Kiss**—Craig Lucas's entertaining romantic comedy slips into fantasy when an old man kisses a bride at her wedding. Barnard Hughes is the old man, Ashley Crow is the bride, and John Dossett is the groom. (3/26/90) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 944-9450.)

**Romeo and Juliet**—Robert Sean Leonard and Gerit Quealy star in this Riverside Shakespeare Company production, directed by Charles Keating. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

**The Rothschilds**—A revival of the 1970 musical by Jerry Bock (score), Sheldon Harnick (lyrics), and Sherman Yellen (book). Lonny Price directed. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

**Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll**—All manner of hypocrites, fakes, liars, and other ethical discards are subjected to Eric Bogosian's incomparable mimicry and wit. The evening is anything but depressing. (2/26/90) (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477. Closes Jan. 6.)

**Shadowlands**—William Nicholson's vulgar stage adaptation of the beautiful television film that he wrote for the BBC about C. S. Lewis is essentially a tourist trap. It Broadwayizes everything that, in the movie, was subtle or sincere. Directed by Elijah Moshinsky; with Nigel Hawthorne and Jane Alexander. (11/26/90) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-4099.)

## LOOK FAST

*As part of current repair work, aging pieces of the Queensboro Bridge have been stripped away, revealing two cast-iron kiosks that bring to mind a Manhattan long since vanished. These Beaux-Arts structures, temporarily placed at Second Avenue and 59th Street, are the only reminders of the streetcars that once crossed the bridge. Built in 1907, the kiosks are also some of the only early-twentieth-century artifacts remaining in this part of town. Colored green, red, and white, and covered with pagoda-like roofs, they originally housed aboveground stairways that led to a station and plaza below the bridge's roadway. Originally, there were four of them, but, according to Tracy Rosan, of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, one was donated to the Brooklyn Children's Museum. "The other," she says, "just disappeared."*

*The repair work, which seemed to represent a death sentence for the remaining kiosks, may actually have granted them a reprieve. The landmarks commission hopes that, as part of the over-all renovation project, the kiosks will be refurbished and placed in a spot between the bridge's inbound lanes. Meanwhile, the structures' current state of limbo offers the ideal situation for viewing them. Sitting alongside Second Avenue like uprooted trees, they are easily seen from the sidewalk or from a passing automobile. If set in their proposed permanent site, however, the kiosks will be seen up close only by those reckless enough to cross four lanes of bridge traffic.*

**Shogun: The Musical**—Or "James Clavell's Shogun: The Musical," to give credit where credit is due, is a real hoot. It has a shipwreck sequence, a lightning effect, an entire number performed on a treadmill, a slow-motion sequence, a gunshot, an earthquake, a rainstorm, a snowstorm, a cavalry charge, a Ninja raid, a haiku competition, and a song about sex paraphernalia, and it begins with two half-naked men banging on drums. What more do you want? (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 246-0102.)

**Six Degrees of Separation**—You're best off knowing nothing about the new John Guare play other than that it represents a perfect meeting of the playwright, director Jerry Zaks, and actress Stockard Channing. Out of a true story—one apparently about celebrity and Good Samaritanism—Guare has fashioned a wistful comedy about race, class, money, imagination, collective conscience, individual psyche, and the impulse toward art. (6/25/90) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

**Smoke on the Mountain**—This loving satire of old-time gospel music, set in 1938, is perfectly delightful. Written by Connie Ray (who also performs, along with six other versatile actor-musicians), it re-creates a Saturday-night service at a small church in rural North Carolina, where a family of more or less devout gospel singers have been invited to appear. (Lambs Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

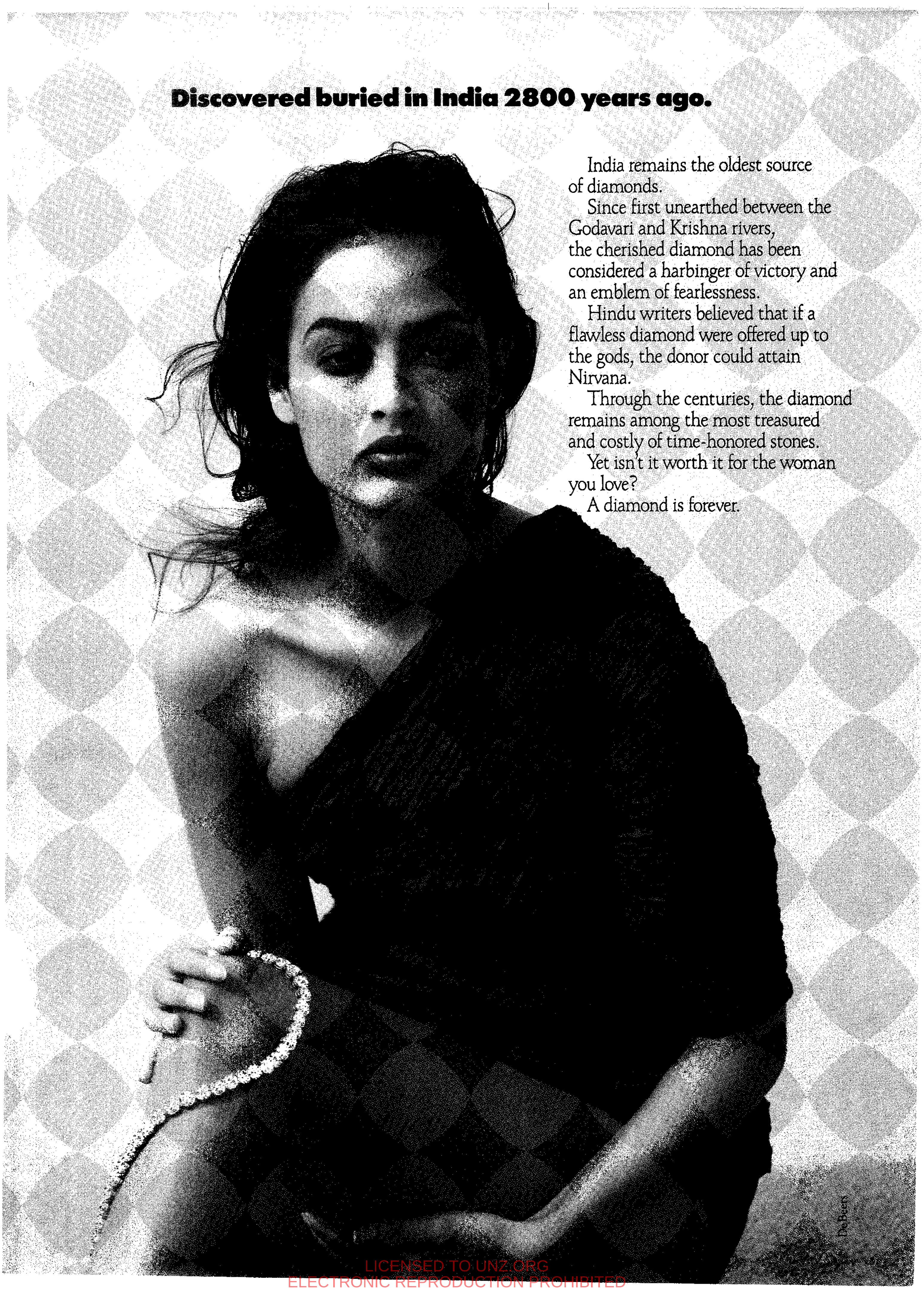
**The Sum of Us**—David Stevens' poignant comedy about how hard it is for parents and children to break free of each other (particularly if they get on too well) is set in present-day Australia. Depending on how you look at it, the play is either very dear and rather flawed or rather dear and very flawed; but cast and direction are both excellent, and Tony Goldwyn is electrifying as a young homosexual who wishes his father weren't quite so laid back about his homosexuality. (11/5/90) (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020.)

**Those Were the Days**—One could almost wish that this tribute to the Yiddish musical theatre, directed and choreographed by Eleanor Reissa, were less assimilated—stricter in its concept and selection (witness the title song, which has nothing to do with the Yiddish musical theatre). But the charming and adept performances of Bruce Adler, Robert Abelson, Mina Bern, and Lori Wilner, together with Zalmen Mlotek's klezmer music, make the show a joyful celebration of the shtetl culture, and put it among the very best of its kind. (Edison, 240 W. 47th St. 302-2302.)

## LONG RUNS

**BLACK AND BLUE:** An evening of classic blues and jazz, conceived, designed, and directed by Claudio Segovia and Héctor Orezzoli, who created "Tango Argentino" in a similarly commemorative but far less visually opulent style. Musicians of renown have been assembled, and while La Vern Baker, Linda Hopkins, and Carrie Smith sing, a troupe of hoofers young and old give the tap-dance subculture a workout. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 246-0102.) . . . **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.) . . . **CITY OF ANGELS:** Larry Gelbart, dramatist; Cy Coleman, composer; Billy Byers, arranger; James Naughton and Gregg Edelman, leading men; and Michael Blakemore, director, are all in top form in this sharp, jokey musical satire about Hollywood in the forties. The plot concerns the making of a private-eye movie (and the unmaking of its author). The spectacular setting and costumes were designed by Robin Wagner and Florence Klotz and lighted by Paul Gallo. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 246-0102.) . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run celebrated its thirtieth birthday last May. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.) . . . **A FEW GOOD MEN:** "Mister Roberts" meets "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." Aaron Sorkin's military-courtroom drama treats issues such as justice, honor, loyalty, and morality with the slick, facile smugness of a half-hour comedy series. Directed by Don Scardino. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.) . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1990:** A source of continual merriment, this revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it, and wrote the witty, barbed lyrics. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.) . . . **GRAND HOTEL:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show, but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 246-0102.) . . . **GYPSY:** This revival of the great Sondheim-Styne-Laurents-Robbins musical (directed by Arthur Laurents himself) is so delightful that we think anyone would be happier for having seen it. [illegible] James, 246 W. 44th St. 246-0102. Closes [illegible] 6.) . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.) . . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.) . . . **OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY:** Jerry Sterner's comedy about a New York corporate raider's attempt to take over a decorous New England business maintains its suspense from beginning to end. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.) . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

# Discovered buried in India 2800 years ago.



India remains the oldest source of diamonds.

Since first unearthed between the Godavari and Krishna rivers, the cherished diamond has been considered a harbinger of victory and an emblem of fearlessness.

Hindu writers believed that if a flawless diamond were offered up to the gods, the donor could attain Nirvana.

Through the centuries, the diamond remains among the most treasured and costly of time-honored stones.

Yet isn't it worth it for the woman you love?

A diamond is forever.

# DANCE

BALLET is so closely associated with youth that one assumes a child will naturally want to watch it the way an adult does: for its dance values and theatrical fantasy. But for very young children—four-to-seven-year-olds, say—this is not necessarily the case. Youngsters of this age really need to hang on to a story, in particular a story where the forces of good and evil are decisively characterized. This seems to be why straightforward stagings of Tchaikovsky ballets go over so well with them, and why film versions that give first place to the storytelling tend to make better introductions to ballet than do versions whose main goal is to record individual performances and choreography.

A last-minute shopper seeking a child's holiday gift might consider three videocassettes. Two have been out for a while: on Corinth, "Stars of the Russian Ballet" (the digest of "Swan Lake" there, with Galina Ulanova, makes the story points exceptionally clear), and, on Embassy, Cocteau's enchanting and balletic retelling of "Beauty and the Beast," dressed by one of ballet's greatest designers, Christian Bérard. (Although the characters occasionally speak—in French, which is subtitled—most of what a child needs to know is told through the images alone.)

The third video is new this season, from Kultur: a 1965 film of "The Sleeping Beauty," with members of the Kirov Ballet, including Alla Sizova (Aurora), Yuri Solovyov (the Prince), Natalia Dudinskaya (Carabosse), Natalia Makarova (Princess Florina), and Valeri Panov (Blue Bird). Many of the elements in the film that drive adult dancegoers up the wall—beginning with prolonged shots of Aurora as a sleeping infant in her cradle—are going to focus the attention of a child. Some things are simply unhelpful to everyone: the fact that Carabosse dances her complaint instead of miming it makes her unintelligible, and the director's penchant for overhead shots makes for much anamorphic distortion of the dancers. But let these pass. The film is unusually effective at putting over two facets of the story that for children are key: the unshakable bond between Aurora and her mother, and the deepening attraction between Aurora and the Prince. The first is a result of both the personal radiance and meticulous mime of Olga Zabotkina, who plays the Queen, and the richly textured and seemingly inexhaustible virtuosity of the young Sizova in the Rose Adagio. The projection of increasing love betweeen Aurora and the Prince is a matter of shrewd theatrical direction, good partnering, and compatible casting. Both Sizova and Solovyov were breathtaking jumpers, but of different kinds: she could go from zero to sixty to zero in a blush; he cruised at thirty-five thousand feet. Their actual connection in the Vision Scene has the gravity of someone saying, "Time, I'd like you to meet space."

**"THE NUTCRACKER"**—Performances by **NEW YORK CITY BALLET:** Dec. 18-20 at 6; Dec. 21 at 8; Dec. 22 at 2 and 8; Dec. 23 at 1 and 5; and Dec. 26 at 2 and 6. Through Jan. 6. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. The season continues through Feb. 24.) . . . **BOLSHOI BALLET GRIGOROVICH COMPANY:** Dec. 19 and Dec. 21 at 7; Dec. 22 at 2 and 7; and Dec. 23 and Dec. 26 at 2. Through Dec. 30. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette St. 1-718 636-4100.) . . . **NEW YORK THEATRE BALLET:** Dec. 22 at 4 and 6:30, and Dec. 23-24 and Dec. 26 at 1 and 3:30. Through Dec. 31. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160.)

**ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATRE**—Dec. 18 at 8: "Landscape," "Games" (company première), and "Shards." . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 8: "Come and Get the Beauty of It Hot," "Forgotten Time," "Suite Otis," and "Read Matthew 11:28." . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 8: "Night Creature," "Hermit Songs," "Vespers," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 8: "Hidden Rites," "After Eden," and "The Stack-Up." . . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 2: "Shards," "Games," and "Memoria." . . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 8: "Blues Suite," "Cry," "North Star," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 23 at 3: "Streams," "Reflections in D," "Impinyuza," and "The Stack-Up." . . . ¶ Dec. 23 at 8: "Hidden Rites," "Masekela Langage," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 25 at 8: "Read Matthew 11:28," "Episodes," "North Star," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 26 at 8: "Hidden Rites," "Games," and "Shards." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Through Dec. 30.)

**PILOBOLUS**—Dec. 18 and Dec. 21-22 at 8, and Dec. 23 at 2: "Molly's Not Dead," "Pseudopodia," "Televisitation," and "Debut C." . . . ¶ Dec. 19-20 at 8: "The Particle Zoo," "Moonblind," "Clandestiny," "Pseudopodia," and "Untitled." . . . ¶ Dec. 23 at 7:30: "Ciona," "Axones," "Shizen," solo from "The Empty Suitor," and "Land's Edge." . . . ¶ Dec. 26 at 8: "The Particle Zoo," "Moonblind," "Tarleton's Resurrection," "Cedar Island" (New York première), and "Day Two." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through Jan. 6.)

# NIGHT LIFE

MANY clubs live and die by their celebrity count, but few are as hung up on it as the China Club. When we telephoned there the other day to find out the club's music schedule, the bartender began dropping names as if we had asked him about his autograph collection. Axl Rose, Bon Jovi, and others whose names flew by too fast to register had performed impromptu at the club, he said. As if that weren't enough, he added, "Tyson's usually here." We stopped in that night (it's at 2130 Broadway, just below 75th Street), and the first thing we noticed was a photo collage of Bowie, Richards, Willis, Lowe, et al. partying at the club. There was a fair-sized crowd, but most of the tables were empty and had "Reserved" signs on them. Why? Because if Cicely Tyson shows up, she'll need a place to sit, of course. At this club it's easy to feel like an extra on the set of a movie whose stars are still in contract negotiations. The crowd is heterogeneous—young professionals, metalheads, rock and rollers—but the one attribute shared by all is a sense of anticipation: maybe tonight there'll be a new photo for the collage.

We watched a peppy funk-ro band play onstage, but neith Browne nor Springsteen hopped [illegible] there to jam with them. We walked around for a while, admiring the aquarium over the bar and the big wood dragon by the dance floor and the Chinese silk-screens on the walls, but we didn't bump into Jagger or Stewart, or even Shaffer. We noticed a curtained-off side room guarded by a bouncer, and figured that Dillon and Estevez were probably in there, but all the bouncer would tell us was "It's not open." Just when we were on our way out, having decided that we'd picked an off night, someone familiar-looking sat down at a reserved table. We thought we'd seen him on TV, but we weren't sure.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

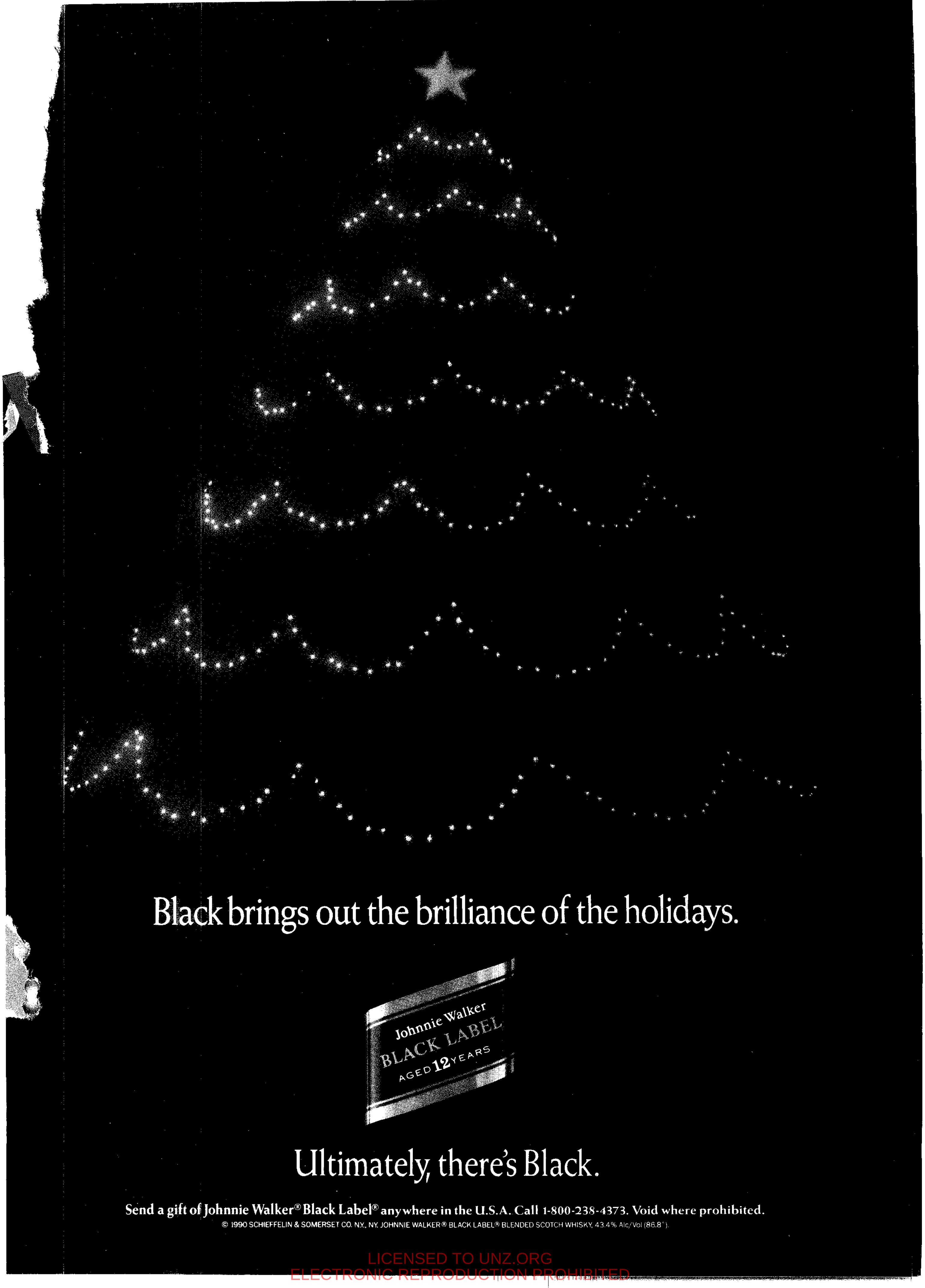
**ALGONQUIN HOTEL,** 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**SUSANNAH MC CORKLE,** a tall, blond, silky-voiced singer and musical scholar (she's known for unearthing forgotten tunes, some of them with Portuguese lyrics), is currently at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. Shows at nine-fifteen Tuesdays through Saturdays. Dining.

**BALLROOM,** 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A tony cabaret attained by passing through an opulent tapas restaurant, where wicker baskets overflow with fruit and vegetables and a row of Serrano hams hangs over the bar; if you haven't had dinner, you may never make it to the show. The **MANHATTAN RHYTHM KINGS** are in session until the end of the month. Closed Dec. 24-25.

**BIRDLAND,** 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—The jazz personnel turns over nearly every night at this airy, loftlike restaurant bar in the gray zone between Zabar's an Columbia. Some may cry gentrification at the sight of the pastel walls, the potte greenery, and the bar crowded with Frasc sippers, but the floor-to-ceiling windo make for some fine Broadway-viewing. T action, in part: Mike Longo's trio on Dec. 19; Dave Schnitter's foursome on Dec. 20; a group led by Mark Morganelli Dec. 21-22; and the Don Friedman trio on Dec. 23. Music from nine Sundays through Thursdays, except Dec. 24-25, and from nine-thirty Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

**BLUE NOTE,** 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A jazz club that would be a perfect stop on a bus tour (there's even a souvenir shop that sells Kodak). It's a good idea to make a reservation and show up well in advance. Singer-pianist **MONTY ALEXANDER** leads a trio Dec. 18-23; Andy Laverne and Dave Samuels play Dec. 24; and a trio led by **HERBIE HANCOCK** starts up Dec. 25. First set at nine. Dining.

**BOTTOM LINE,** 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—A big, pleasant room where they pack them in until someone says uncle. The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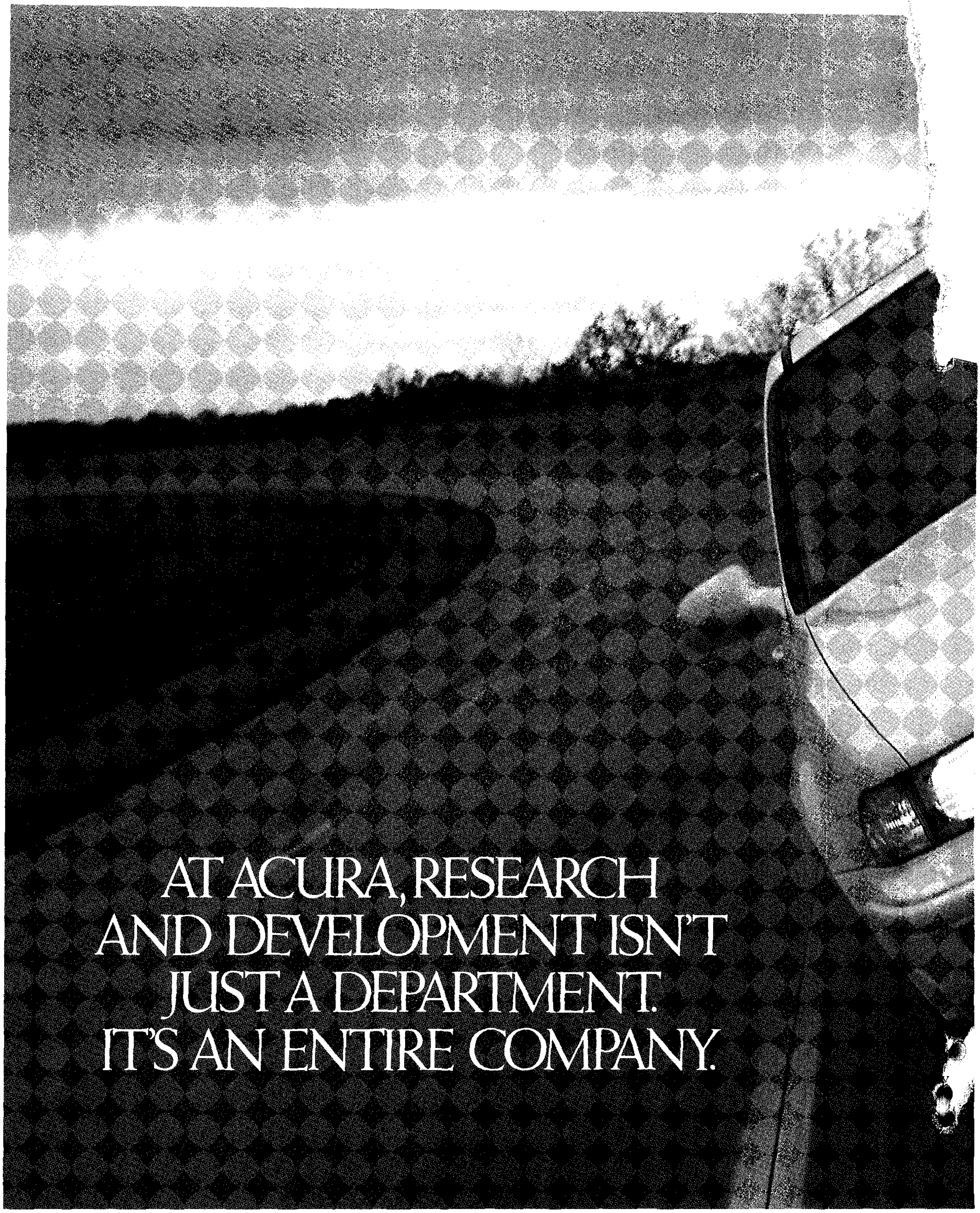
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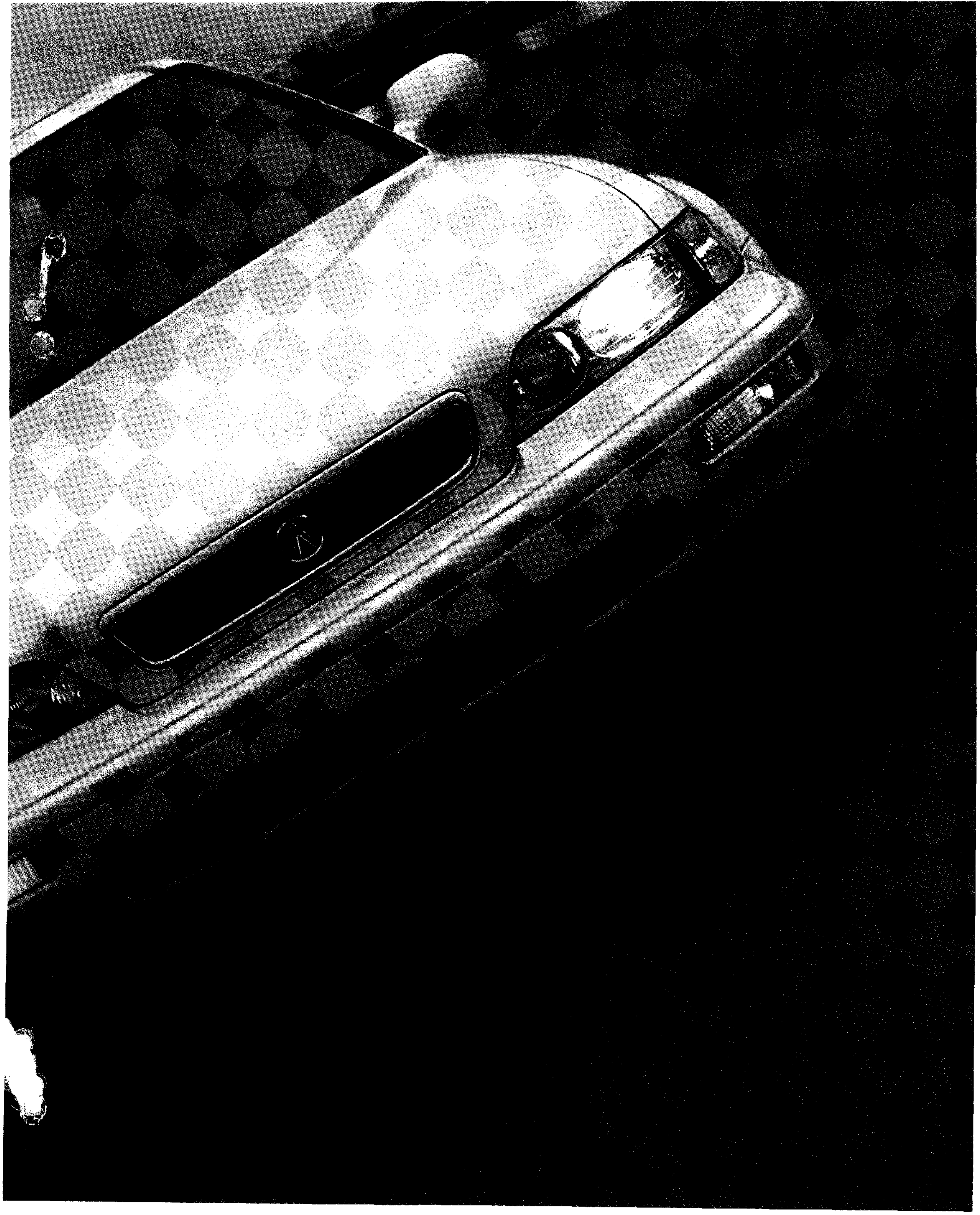

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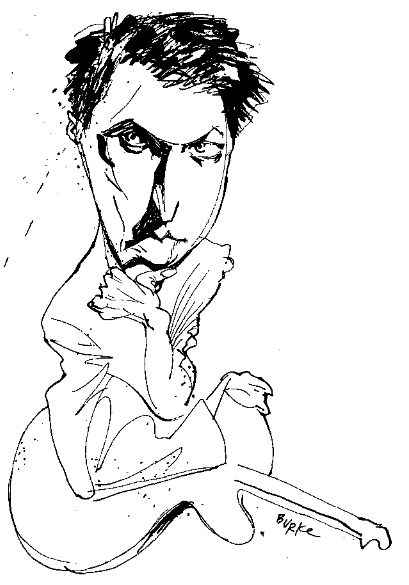
# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

walls and columns are basic black with some rainbow detailing here and there—the place looks a little like the outside of a van. The quirky folk sisters known as the **ROCHES** will offer a "Christmas Show" Dec. 21-22. Maggie, Terre, and Suzzy Roche offer slightly flip, astringent, and telling self-analysis—their songs are heartfelt-deadpan dispatches on romantic sabotage and middle-of-the-night honesty. They comment on and joke about each other's stories, and make it all transcendent with ethereal, genetically tuned harmonies. The Roches' newest album, "We Three Kings," finds the sisters carolling. Some of their renditions are beautiful and straight-faced and some of them are a little off the wall. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at eight and eleven, and Fridays and Saturdays at eight-thirty and eleven-thirty. Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster. Closed Dec. 24-25.

**BRADLEY'S,** 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A neighborhood bar where, if your neighbors coöperate, you can hear the beautiful, singular sound of musicians thinking. A trio consisting of pianist **KENNY BARRON,** bassist **PAUL WEST,** and drummer **BEN RILEY** holds forth Dec. 17-22. Pianist Kirk Lightsey and bassist Don Pate and Santi Debriano (with the latter doubling on guitar) start up on Dec. 24. Music from nine-forty-five.

**CARLYLE HOTEL,** Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, three walls of Vertès murals, and **BOBBY SHORT.** Sets at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans' Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** presides at the piano from nine-forty-five Tuesdays through Saturdays. Closed Christmas.

**CAT CLUB,** 76 E. 13th St. (505-0090)—Every Sunday night, this club, usually dominated by metalheads, is ceded to a gang of Lindy Hop enthusiasts called the New York Swing Dance Society. The hoofers run the gamut from seasoned pros who could do the Lindy in their sleep to enthusiastic novices whose steps are more commonly seen in aerobics classes. The **RAY ABRAMS** big band holds forth on Dec. 23. Music from eight to midnight.



*Marc Ribot at the Knitting Factory*

**CONDON'S,** 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—A snug, candlelit catacomb just east of Union Square. Drummer **ROY HAYNES** brings a quartet in Dec. 18-23. Music after ten.

**CONTINENTAL DIVIDE,** 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, posers, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. The motif is prehistoric punk—a Stone Age mural, assorted toy dinosaurs and pterodactyls—and on peak nights there's a "take no prisoners" atmosphere. Poet **ALLEN GINSBERG** and friends will be here Dec. 20. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at ten, Fridays at midnight, and Saturdays at eleven. Closed Christmas.

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**FAT TUESDAY'S,** 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—If submarines had jazz clubs, they might look like this basement haunt, which is not the place for those with a fear of intimacy: at the front tables you can go eye to eye with your favorite performers, and no matter where you're seated there's not much room to practice your T'ai Chi. The **RALPH MOORE** quintet holds sway Dec. 18-23, and guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL,** the Thomas Edison of reverb, claims Dec. 24-25. **BETTY CARTER,** an accomplished chanteuse whose voice is clear and piercing in the higher registers and all business when she dips down for a low note, begins a week-long stay on Dec. 26. Music from eight. Dining.

**FORTUNE GARDEN PAVILION,** 209 E. 49th St. (753-0101)—With jazz you get eggroll. At this posh-looking two-floor Chinese restaurant, tucked into a midtown skyscraper, you'll find a lot of business types and a lot of hanging plants. In the middle of the main dining room, you'll also find trombonist **AL GREY,** a Basie-band veteran who, aside from being a topnotch soloist, excels in the little-known art of making wah-wah noises with a rubber-plunger mute. At his side will be guitarist **JOE COHN** and bassist **STEVE NOVOSEL.** Music from eight Mondays through Saturdays, and from seven on Sundays.

**JAN WALLMAN'S,** 49 W. 44th St. (764-8930)—A mirror-walled burgundy room that gives one the not unpleasant sensation of sitting in a giant glass of red wine. Some upcoming events: Courtenay Day on Dec. 18; Ronny Whyte on Dec. 20; and Chera McGill & the Accidentals on Dec. 21. Shows at nine and eleven. Dining. Closed Sundays.

**KNITTING FACTORY,** 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—Situated in a neighborhood that boasts the Puck Building to the west and a host of windshield washers to the east, this modest space provides a forum for free-thinking musicians. Beat and melody are optional, "music" and "noise" relative terms. An intriguing duo comes in on Dec. 21: singer **SYD STRAW** (of Golden Palaminos fame, among other things) and **MARC RIBOT,** a guitarist who, besides leading the Rootless Cosmopolitans, seems to show up at all the right places: on the Lounge Lizards' "Voice of Chunk," on Elvis Costello's "Spike," on a recent Marianne Faithfull album, and on several records by Tom Waits, who has described Ribot as "an innovator who believes in compulsory distortion, rude chords, and gypsy phraseology." Other events: **CHUNK** on Dec. 20; **DEFUNKT** on Dec. 22. Music after nine.

**LAUTERBACH'S BROOKLYN BEAT,** 335 Prospect Ave., at Sixth Ave., Brooklyn. (1-718 788-9140)—A grungy but well-intentioned watering hole devoted to homegrown Brooklyn bands. The emphasis here is on exposed cement, although one wall is decorated with Polaroids—"St. Patty's 1986" (people in green hats and leis), "New Year's 1988-89" (people in red hats and leis). Lauterbach's microwave menu includes shepherd's pie and chicken parmigiana, but the musical menu is almost always a better bet.

**LONE STAR ROADHOUSE,** 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—A Texan hangout where good old boys and Southern sorority girls mix with urban cowboys. "Roadhouse" is an accurate description: it's a checked-tablecloth, long-necked-Bud, side-of-beef kind of place. **COMMANDER CODY** performs on Dec. 22, along with Young Neal. **URBAN BLIGHT** is slated for Dec. 26. Music after nine. Closed Dec. 24-25.

**MANNY'S CAR WASH,** 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—A recent addition to the little-heralded Upper East Side club scene. Don't go expecting to be sprayed with soapy water and massaged by large brushes: the fluorescent sign outside is the only car-wash reference. Inside, the place looks like an adman's idea of a blues bar. **BO DIDDLEY, JR.** (nephew of the real McCoy) and the Black Widow Band perform Dec. 21-22, along with Bar-B-Que Bob & the Spareribs. Music from nine. Closed Christmas.

**MAXWELL'S,** 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—A small-pond club for big-fish bands. There's not much here to look at: it's a back-room affair with a dingy stage and a baby grand someone apparently tried to cover with papier-mâché. Still, the bookers know their college-radio playlists. **LIFE IN A BLENDER** and others fill the Dec. 21 bill. The **SPIN DOCTORS,** a local band whose Grateful Dead-like, jam-till-it-hurts creed has won them a Dead-like following, claim Dec. 22. Closed Dec. 24-25.

**MICHAEL'S PUB,** 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—A midtown restaurant and jazz lair for the tasselled-loafers set. The dark, sombre bar (carved-wood lions, iron grillwork) looks like a place you'd find in London's financial district; the dining room—putting-green carpet, lime-green leather banquettes—has more of a country-club feel. **FRANK STALLONE,** who is Sylvester's younger brother and who wrote music for and appeared in "Rocky," is currently in residence, concentrating on big-band arrangements by Billy May. Closed Sundays. Closed Dec. 24-25.

**RAINBOW & STARS,** 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A great, pricey cabaret in the sky. Singer **LORNA LUFT** is currently in swing. Shows begin at nine. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

**RED BLAZER TOO,** 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—A place where a fella and a gal can put on the feedbag, get a little tight, and cut a rug. Monday's belong to Howie Wyeth's ragtime trio, Tuesdays to **VINCE GIORDANO AND THE NIGHTHAWKS,** Wednesdays to the Stan Rubin band, Fridays to Rick Hardeman's outfit, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and His Stompers. Music from six on Sundays, from eight-thirty Mondays through Thursdays, and from nine Fridays and Saturdays.

**SOUNDS OF BRAZIL,** 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A big, cheerful room, painted a light tropical blue, where you can pick 'em up and set 'em down to sounds from Brazil, Africa, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. **YOMO TORO** will be here Dec. 21, and the **BHUNDU BOYS** come in Dec. 22. Closed Sundays. Dining. Closed Dec. 24-25.

**VILLAGE GATE,** 160 Bleecker St. (475-5120)—In the gym-size downstairs room—which, with its black walls, black pillars, and black pipes and ducts, resembles a live-in Nevelson sculpture—Brazilian singer and pianist **TANIA MARIA** is in swing Dec. 20-22. . . . ¶ One flight up, in the airy space known as the Terrace Bar, pianist **HERMAN FOSTER** works with bassist **JAY LEONHART** beginning Dec. 19. **DAPHNE HELLMAN** and her group, **HELLMAN'S ANGELS,** play here on Tuesdays.

**VILLAGE VANGUARD,** 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The late Max Gordon, who opened this holiest of jazz shrines in 1935, once described the club's early patrons as a mix of "poets, W.P.A. writers, hustlers, broads on the make, and moochers." A trio consisting of the young, Monk-influenced pianist **GERI ALLEN,** the bassist **CHARLIE HADEN,** and the drummer **PAUL MOTIAN** will be here on Dec. 18-23. The **CHARLIE HADEN LIBERATION MUSIC ORCHESTRA** starts work on Dec. 25. Music after ten. Closed Christmas Eve.

**WETLANDS,** 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Good music and grass-roots organizing. Downstairs, you'll find a hallway decorated with seventies black-light posters—the kind your sister had in high school—and a relatively quiet, smoke-free bar. Upstairs, there's another, livelier bar and a stage, which on Dec. 23 will be occupied by reggae's self-styled Black Cinderella, **SISTER CAROL.** Closed Christmas Eve.

**WOODY'S,** 82 E. 4th St. (982-3686)—Rolling Stones guitarist Ron Wood's club is a black-painted basement with mirrors, rotating spotlights, and enough sofas to rival Jennifer Convertibles. Stones memorabilia, with an emphasis on Ronnie himself, provide the primary decoration. The **GOO GOO DOLLS,** a young rock band with some infectious, if at times predictable, songs, peform on Dec. 20. Shows Wednesdays through Saturdays, from about eleven.

**ZINNO,** 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—One of those snazzy, awninged eateries you've seen nestled amid brownstones in the Village. Pianist **GEOFF KEEZER** and bassist **PETER WASHINGTON** begin a week-long gig on Dec. 24. Music weeknights from eight and Sundays from seven. Closed Christmas.

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**SKIN SUPPLIES FOR MEN**

### EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

In this town, you have as much chance of getting someone to cross a river to attend a party as you do of finding five viewers who'll miss "Cop Rock." But in Los Angeles, where things are larger than life and as spread out as Tralfamadore, nocturnal obscurity is as common as insincerity on Arsenio's lips. All a veteran party giver has to do is find a new location half a tankful from anywhere, print no invites, issue no address, tell only ten friends and one other person how to get there, and—voilà—hundreds of Angelinos, each sporting one black vest, two tattoos, and three handfuls of molding mud, will intrepidly cruise the city's desolate boundaries searching for that other soul.

We were tipped off that the contact to direct us to Brent Bolthouse's new space would be on the corner of 6th and Alameda, an intersection that handles as many pedestrians in an hour as there are nutritionists who recommend fried tripe. All we saw there at first was a black-windowed Jeep. Then a car pulled up; a hat became visible; someone knocked on the window; and the car pulled away.

One doesn't expect any part of L.A. to look like the edge of Elyria, Ohio, but Bolthouse's club is the kind of place you swear you wouldn't be caught dead in, because you normally would be if you were. Nonetheless, we arrived in the vicinity in one piece and immediately saw a man standing atop an unmarked building. Suddenly, someone else started banging on the building's gates to signal that the L.A.P.D.—who hassle this kind of club in homage to Jack Webb—was in the distance. In short order, we were flung into the club with such force that we disrupted the line waiting for the indoor Port-O-Sans. The place, it turned out, was fun: great funk, decent sound, minimal lighting. After a while, though, we had to leave. "You can't come back," someone warned us at the door, "because of the police." We had to wait about five minutes for the coast to clear, and then we exited, followed closely by a pushy young woman, who was looking for Monty but was unaware of the finality of her next move. "Monty, I want to leave. C'mon, let's go." But Monty wasn't outside, and after the door slammed behind her she was dateless and in the middle of nowhere. What's a girl to do? Pray for cops.

### IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

**Big Apple Circus**—Performances under the little big top run through Jan. 6 in Lincoln Center's Damrosch Park. For ticket and schedule information, call 268-3030.

**"The Christmas Spectacular"**—Radio City Music Hall's annual Yuletide dancearama—with the Rockettes, of course—runs through Jan. 3. (Sixth Ave. at 50th St. For information about show times and tickets, call 247-4777.)

**"Blanket"**—A one-woman performance piece by Ann Carlson, in which an old lady takes a trip through popular culture. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Dec. 20-22 at 8.)

**Deb Margolin and Reno**—Billing themselves as "a coupla weirdos." (WOW Café, 59 E. 4th St. 460-8067. Dec. 21-22 at 11 P.M.)

# ART

The current exhibition of works on paper by Egon Schiele, at the Galerie St. Etienne (24 West 57th Street; through January 12), is a surprisingly moving experience. It is surprising because for a lot of people Schiele—who died in the 1918 flu epidemic at the age of twenty-eight—was an early enthusiasm. The appeal of his work is perhaps like Henry Miller's in this respect, but Schiele's images sustain their heat well past a viewer's first youth. His work, typically graphic in both senses, is the very embodiment of the most fevered adolescent longings for freedom, speed, definition, experience, sordidness, and sex—feelings that never quite go away. He is the exemplary Expressionist. Almost all of his work is twisted compositionally and conveys bodily angst, and his sexual renderings are among the most intimate, confrontational, *maudits*, and beautiful in art. His stringy teen-age Sapphos and Törlesses, and his neurasthenic aesthetes, may make you think that the very flesh of his subjects is being consumed by uneasy desires. In Schiele's "Reclining Girl in Dark Blue Dress," the girl's narrowly exposed sex is itself as riveting as a fire.

Schiele's work, though more impassioned and shockingly direct, resembles Francesco Clemente's. Schiele's portraits of himself as a bohemian dandy (his mother *was* Bohemian) on the wrong side of the Styx—a work, for instance, such as the intoxicating "Self-Portrait in Jerkin with Right Elbow Raised"—seem the obvious precedents for Clemente's self-portraits as an aestheticized and polymorphously erotic spectre. (There is a Clemente retrospective at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, through December 23.) Where Clemente's Orientalist style is India-derived, Schiele's was shaped by the general fin-de-siècle enthusiasm for Japan and, undoubtedly as well, by Léon Bakst's Ottoman-inspired designs for the Ballets Russes. For both Schiele and Clemente, however, the best results are dazzling and much the same: lambent, jewel-toned colors and a genius for making paint solution take possession of paper in such a way that images actually seem to be born there, at the artist's imperious will, instantly and without due process.

### MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

**Metropolitan Museum,** Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries" includes four hundred works of art from the pre-Columbian era through 1950. Through Jan. 13. . . . ¶ "Théâtre de la Mode," in the Costume Institute, is a re-creation of a 1945 fashion exhibition that raised money for French war relief. Due to a fabric shortage, the couture, by such designers as Balenciaga, Lanvin, and Worth, was presented in miniature, on thirty-inch wire mannequins with ceramic heads. A hundred and seventy of the original dolls have been restored for this show. . . . ¶ "Albrecht Dürer: The Apocalypse" presents fifteen woodcuts of apocalyptic catastrophes, along with a small number of Gothic and Renaissance prints. . . . ¶ Photographs from the fifties and sixties, selected from the museum's collection. Among the artists shown are William Klein, Helen Levitt, Bill Brandt, and Lisette Model. . . . ¶ A new skylit sculpture court has opened on the main floor, and is home to several large French and Italian works from the seventeenth century to the twentieth, including Sarrazin's "Leda and the Swan" and Rodin's "The Burghers of Calais." . . . ¶ The recently acquired "Evening: Landscape with Aqueduct," by Théodore Géricault (1791-1824), is the focus of a small exhibition of his landscapes and related works. Through Jan. 13. . . . ¶ Fifteen American quilts and coverlets, made between 1803 and 1930, are on view. Through Jan. 20. . . . ¶ More than two hundred American portrait miniatures, most of them in watercolor on ivory, and none larger than six inches in size. Among the immortalized sitters are George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and Abraham Lincoln. Through Feb. 10. . . . ¶ A hundred and twenty-five functional tools and decorative pieces from New Guinea, carved from three types of bone: *bird, pig, and human*. . . . ¶ *The* annual Christmas tree and Neapolitan crèche are on view in the Medieval Sculpture Hall. Through Jan. 13. (Open Tuesdays, except Christmas, through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

**Museum of Modern Art,** 11 W. 53rd St.—"High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture" is divided into four themes (graffiti, caricature, comics, advertising) and includes more than two hundred and fifty works. Through Jan. 15. . . . ¶ A breakthrough show of works in various mediums by Kiki Smith, one of the contemporary scene's outstanding originals. Smith, who seems to mistrust slickness and packaging of all sorts, has often displayed an offhand approach to exhibitions. Two of the more memorable pieces on view here are a site-specific floor sculpture consisting of much-larger-than-life-size lead-crystal spermatozoa, and an exquisitely fragile wall relief, made of what appear to be flayed paper skins, that gives a whole new meaning to the word "bodysuit." Through Jan. 1. . . . ¶ Twenty-one new photographs by Paul D'Amato, Carl Pope, and JoAnn Verburg. Through Jan. 8. . . . ¶ A video installation by Gary Hill, consisting of body images displayed through stripped cathode-ray tubes. Through Jan. 6. (Open daily, except Wednesdays and Christmas, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

**Guggenheim Museum,** Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—*The museum is closed for renovation until autumn, 1991.*

**Whitney Museum of American Art,** Madison Ave. at 75th St.—Thirty-seven black-and-white and color silk-screen paintings by Robert Rauschenberg that were executed between 1962 and 1964. Through March 17. . . . ¶ "Mind Over Matter," a show of works by six "idea-oriented" artists—Liz Larner, Ronald Jones, Tishan Hsu, Nayland Blake, Ashley Bickerton, and Annette Lemieux. Through Jan. 6. . . . ¶ Several animal sculptures from the museum's collection are on view in the lobby, including works by Hunt Diederich, Gaston Lachaise, and Alexander Calder. Through Jan. 6. (Open Tuesdays, except Christmas, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

**Brooklyn Museum,** Eastern Parkway—A lobby installation by Joseph Kosuth, who has selected works from the museum's collection that at one time or another may have been deemed offensive. Through Dec. 31. . . . ¶ An exhibition of sixty paintings by Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847–1917). Through Jan. 7. . . . ¶ "Milton Avery in Black and White" is a display of eighty drawings in pencil, ink, and crayon, made by Avery between 1929 and 1959. Through Dec. 31. . . . ¶ Forty works of art from Oceania (mostly from the Sepik and Ramu river basins in New Guinea), including three-inch-long fishhooks, three monumental carved-wood "guardians," and a skull rack *made of palm spathe, raffia, and bamboo.* Through Feb. 4. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 10 to 5.)

**Cooper-Hewitt Museum,** Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—Scenic and architectural drawings by the eighteenth-century theatre designers and builders Francesco and Giovanni Carlo Bibiena. Through Dec. 30. . . . ¶ Two hundred pieces of elaborately worked gold jewelry spanning four thousand years of Grecian culture. From the Benaki Museum, in Athens. Through Jan. 13. (Open Tuesdays, except Christmas, 10 to 9, with no admission charge from 5 to 9; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

**Grolier Club,** 47 E. 60th St.—An exhibition of several different types of documents produced during the Second World War: pamphlets, posters, propaganda leaflets, invasion maps, personal letters, and official speeches. One display juxtaposes two letters sent home to wives after the launching of D Day: one from Eisenhower, hopeful and optimistic, the other from Rommel, who wrote, "The enemy's superiority in nearly all regards is overwhelming." Starts Dec. 19. (Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 5. Closed Dec. 24 and Christmas.)

**Morgan Library,** 29 E. 36th St.—"Be Merry & Wise" examines the development of children's books in England from the seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth. Among the many books, manuscripts, and drawings on view are the "History of Tom Thumbe" (1621, the first English folktale in print), Dorothy Kilner's "The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse" (1783), and the third edition of Edward Lear's "Book of Nonsense" (1861). Through Feb. 3. (Open Tuesdays, except Christmas, through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

**Museum of American Folk Art,** Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—"The Cutting Edge." The surprising thing about this show of folk art from the past thirty years is that the work is, indeed, such a thriving art form today—and with all the freshness and inventiveness of historic pieces. One of the most beguiling, for example, is "Cow" (1985), by Manie Deschillie, a Navajo craftsperson who found a new use for cardboard and what appear to be discarded long johns. (Open daily, 9 to 9.)

**National Academy of Design,** Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—A hundred and thirteen master drawings, from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth, by such artists as Poussin, Fragonard, Delacroix, and Cézanne. From the Louis-Antoine Prat collection, in Paris. Through Jan. 20. . . . ¶ Drawings and watercolors by the British Romantic Henry Fuseli (1741-1825). (Open Tuesdays, except Christmas, noon to 8, with no admission charge from 5 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

**The New Museum,** 583 Broadway—"Rhetorical Image" seeks to investigate the ways in which artists from around the world respond to various political situations. Among the twenty artists presenting photographs, videos, paintings, and installations are Barbara Steinman, Tatsuo Miyajima, Cildo Meireles, and Krzysztof Wodiczko. Through Feb. 3. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

**New York Public Library,** Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"On Paper" examines the history of papermaking, from its invention in China through John Cage's edible paper. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall. Open daily, except Sundays and Christmas, 10 to 6.) . . . ¶ Manuscript fragments, letters, first editions, photographs, and illustrations are all part of "Charles Dickens: His Life and Work." (Berg Collection. Open daily, except Sundays, Thursdays, and Christmas, 10 to 6.)

### GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. They will be closed Christmas.)

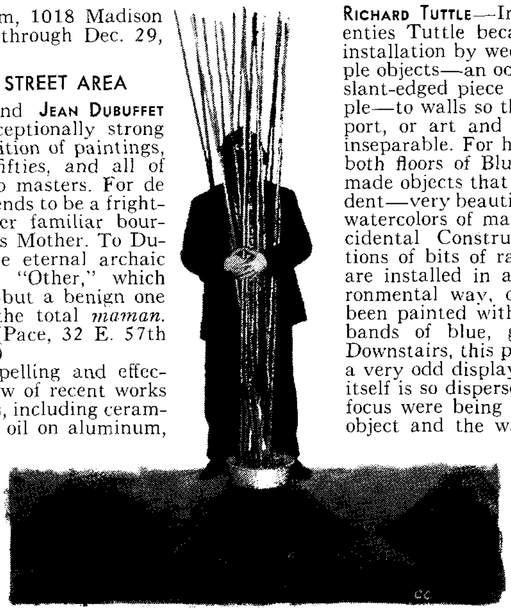
**Sigmar Polke**—An essential show of key sixties' works in mixed mediums, probably unfamiliar to many American viewers, by this most mercurial and influential of contemporary German artists. The "Potato House" has been reconstructed, along with other ephemeral masterpieces. (This is the conceptual Polke.) Through Jan. 19. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St. Closed Dec. 26-29.)

**"The British Imagination: Twentieth-Century Paintings, Sculpture, and Drawings"**—A show in which, even in the most ostensibly abstract art, one detects an obsession with the figure and with narrative. Works by twenty-two artists are included, beginning with the early moderns Walter Sickert and Gwen John, and culminating with some of the best-known English painters working today, including Bacon, Freud, Kossoff, Auerbach, Hodgkin, and Hockney. Through Jan. 12. (Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St.)

**Short List**—**GIORGIO DE CHIRICO,** Borghi, 26 E. 80th St. (through Jan. 15, except Dec. 24-31); **GLENN GOLDBERG,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. (through Jan. 9); **MARYAN,** Bernard, 33 E. 74th St. (through Dec. 22); **GRAHAM NICKSON** and **PAUL RESIKA,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. (closes at 3 on Dec. 24, through Dec. 29); **CHARLES WELLS,** Forum, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. (through Dec. 29, except Dec. 26).

### GALLERIES—57th STREET AREA

**Willem de Kooning** and **Jean Dubuffet** (1901-85)—An exceptionally strong and coherent exhibition of paintings, mostly from the fifties, and all of women, by the two masters. For de Kooning, Woman tends to be a frightening though rather familiar bourgeoise: the floozy as Mother. To Dubuffet, she was the eternal archaic mystery—yes, the "Other," which rhymes with . . . —but a benign one really, more like the total *maman.* Through Jan. 19. (Pace, 32 E. 57th St. Closed Dec. 22.)



*Sigmar Polke at Werner*

**Mary Frank**—A compelling and effectively installed show of recent works in various mediums, including ceramic, bronze, plaster, oil on aluminum, oil on and under glass, and drawings on paper as well as on natural elements such as fungi. Frank has always been an extremely idiosyncratic figurative artist whose work, in whatever medium, eludes summary. Mythology—variously Biblical, classical, folkloric, or fairy-tale-derived—is a frequent source, but her subject always seems to be screened through a very specific personal filter. It is often hard to locate an exact poetic mood. A light and somewhat arty girlishness, for instance, is countered by a formidable morbid streak; a stylistic directness is offset by emotional inscrutability. This exhibition stimulates both thought and feeling: it makes you want to linger and figure it out. Through Dec. 28. (Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays, except Dec. 24.)

**Bill Jacklin**—Big, brash paintings with slick, streaked images and a mishmash of flailing references. The crowded park scenes seem to be a cross between Seurat and Guy Pène du Bois, while a portrayal of people waiting in Grand Central could be a combination of Hopper and Kenneth Hayes Miller. Two fuzzy overviews of theatre audiences recall Everett Shinn at his most saccharine, as well as those cheesy contemporary "Impressionist" canvases one finds in glitzy hotels and high-society galleries. Through Dec. 31. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

**Robert M. Kulicke**—A show of tiny flower and still-life oil paintings in traditional frames with a lot of oomph. The artist, who is in fact best known as a master framer, seems to have been influenced by Manet (the marvellous little offhand works), and perhaps by Albert York, who shows at this gallery. In any case, this show is a breezy trifle, and charming as can be. Through Dec. 22. (Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St.)

**Victor Pasmore**—An engaging retrospective of work, mostly oil paintings and relief constructions, by a mercurial English modernist who is now eighty-two years old but remains little known here. By around 1945, Pasmore, who had begun as a realist-intimist, more or less in the tradition of Walter Sickert, surprised the British art world, revealing himself as an abstract painter, initially in a Constructivist mode. Today he makes lyrical, biomorphic paintings, often on wood, that suggest Tachism. Pasmore, in other words, gets to everything about twenty-five years late, but no matter, he does what he does idiosyncratically and very well. His colors are particularly interesting: close English tonalities and nothing but, yet the tones, especially the blues and browns, really glow. Through Feb. 16. (Center for International Contemporary Arts, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

**Sean Scully**—Few artists have as sophisticated a sense of composition as Scully, and his new works are, as usual, masterly. They feature the artist's stripe configurations, multi-panel formats, and painting-within-painting structures, but now the stripes are very wide and the scale quite corporate. Although they seem to strive for the grand scale of the Abstract Expressionists, the enlargement brings little more than added bulk. Through Jan. 9. (McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

**Richard Tuttle**—In the nineteen-seventies Tuttle became the master of installation by wedding his very simple objects—an octagon of paper or a slant-edged piece of wood, for example—to walls so that object and support, or art and environment, were inseparable. For his current show, on both floors of Blum Helman, he has made objects that look more independent—very beautiful, humbly framed watercolors of marks, and almost incidental Constructivistic constructions of bits of raw wood—but that are installed in an adamantly environmental way, on walls that have been painted with brushy horizontal bands of blue, green, and yellow. Downstairs, this placement makes for a very odd display because the space itself is so dispersed, as if the artist's focus were being pulled between the object and the wall. But in the upstairs gallery, which is more intimate, the installation nature of the work kicks in strongly. There the artist has created an airy jewel box, in which the watercolors suggest Kandinsky's early warlike "abstract" paintings. Through Jan 12. (20 W. 57th St.)

**"Classic Modernism"**—An extraordinarily fine show of paintings by venerated twentieth-century figures and by the younger artist Peter Halley, for whom this show is, in a sense, a test. There are delightfully straightforward juxtapositions, principally a chain of audacious red, yellow, and blue paintings by Mondrian, Kelly, and Newman, one having inspired the next. Other telling juxtapositions include a diamond Mondrian hung next to an off-axis Kelly. There is also a wonderful early Ryman of squiggly white paint strokes with bits of underpainting in mustard and rust. While it is perhaps unfair to pit Mondrian and Newman against Halley at this stage in his still developing career, his works hold their own quite well. Through Dec. 29. (Sidney Janis, 110 W. 57th St. Open Mondays, except Dec. 24.)

**Short List**—**LUIS CRUZ AZACETA,** Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St. (through Dec. 29); **CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. (through Jan. 19); **JEAN DUBUFFET,** Urban, 500 Park Ave., at 59th St. (open Mondays, through Dec. 22); **FRANK FAULKNER,** Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. (through Dec. 29); **DAVID HOCKNEY,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 5); **ROBERT INDIANA,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 22); **WIFREDO LAM,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. (through Dec. 22); **CREIGHTON MICHAEL,** Ruth Siegel, 24 W. 57th St. (through Jan. 16, except Dec. 26-29); **GEORGE SUGARMAN,** Washburn, 41 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 19).

### GALLERIES—SoHo

**Guillaume Bijl**—Two shows of new work. At the Shainman gallery (560 Broadway), this Belgian artist displays a series of eight tableaux of assembled objects. Together they contain some sort of full life cycle: from decorating a home to storing the residue of lives past, from the dressing room to the rec room to the attic. Two of the groupings consist of decorative objects—one of classical plaster ornaments, the other of framed posters—complete with price labels. They bypass the usual discussion of commodity in a romantic yet unsentimental way. In a separate installation, at Koury Wingate (578 Broadway), the artist has taken a very different tack, transforming a small room into the perfect tuxedo-rental shop. It is so exact in its details that some viewers may mistakenly think the current lull in the art market has prompted at least one gallery to hedge its bets with another line of goods. Both shows through Dec. 22.

**Anh Duong**—As many people must know by now, Duong is a fashion model (and an inspiration for Christian Lacroix), and this very strong début show of large portrait paintings is indeed wonderfully stylish and astute. Duong paints thin. Her surfaces look stainlike rather than brushy, and her colors are straightforward and tonal, with some good acid contrasts. Her drawing style is at once dandified and blunt, and these portraits, of various friends and fashionable figures about town, convey likenesses as well as psychologies without expressionistic fuss. Duong gets it all across through the body language of her figures and through individualized background motifs that somehow evoke character without being excessively literal. The socialite Anne McNally (wife of the restaurateur, Brian), for example, is spotlit against a dark ground, and she wears a see-through chartreuse dress and an odd defensive stance: the very image of a harried avant-garde hausfrau. The portraits, in other words, seem to be lightly satiric as well as suavely hieratic. Through Jan. 5. (Sperone Westwater, 121 Greene St. Closed Dec. 26-29.)

**Anton Henning**—Well-made abstract paintings with touches of Dubuffet, Tàpies, Rauschenberg, Twombly, Schnabel, and Baechler by a young German artist whose hand seems quicker than his mind. Through Dec. 29. (Baghoomian, 555 Broadway. Closed Dec. 26.)

**Jon Kessler**—Very touching narrative tableaux, usually with kinetic elements, that are entertaining but also replete with signs of self-examination. In most there is the sense of life in a fishbowl. In one piece a mechanical arm draws continuously, in an "art performance" that one views through a magnifying sheet of glass. Another mimics an old television console with a scene of a little house on a prairie behind its glass front; painted Plexiglas and a light that fades on and off create the illusion of perpetual sunrise and sunset but also suggest a passing life. There are references to "Blade Runner" and David Lynch's "Dune," as well as to Jules Verne, Gotham City, and medical examinations. Through Jan. 5. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St. Closed Dec. 26-29.)

**Justen Ladda**—This artist of grace and intelligence seems caught between worlds. Known primarily for guerrilla public art installations that, when viewed from the right spot, pop out at the viewer like mammoth-scale 3-D nightmares, Ladda is now attempting to bring his mysterious sense of poetry to discrete objects. This show features a series of "mirrors," which are photographically printed, fanciful antique frames surrounding dark, vaguely reflective fields of lacquered ink. In the mirrors themselves are occasional images, such as a mask, an ape, or a suit of armor. Also included is a richer series of "straight" paintings on beautifully grained woods. Through Dec. 22. (Gorney, 100 Greene St.)

**Agnes Martin**—A group of large paintings with horizontal slate-gray stripes that are much bolder and more hard-edged—less landscapey too—than before. They are handsome but puzzling. Has the reclusive Martin, who lives in New Mexico, been thinking about cities? Or about Southwestern storms? Through Jan. 12. (Pace, 142 Greene St. Closed Dec. 22.)

**Mc Dermott & Mc Gough**—Of all the gay male teams that deal openly with issues of homosexuality in their art, this one is perhaps the most dandified. At times their work can be too precious, too faux-pre-Edison, but often it is very strong. Some of the most finely detailed paintings in this show have an underlayer of gestural brushwork that in no way corresponds to the needs of the imagery. This kind of subtle deceit—with the wild underlying the domesticated—is a metaphor for much of the work. Among the effective pieces in this show are two retrospective paintings entitled "Splendid Achievements" (given false dates of 1943 and 1912), which are a mélange of the artists' works that have dealt most directly with homosexuality. "27, Rue de Fleurus, 1915," which refers to Gertrude Stein's salon and depicts an Arts and Crafts-type wall with an early Picasso hanging on it, is a very beautiful and mysterious work about the consummate decorativeness of art. Through Jan. 5. (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. Closed Dec. 26-29.)

**Mario Merz**—For several decades Merz has been using his neon Fibonacci numbers in all sorts of works, ranging in spirit from aggressively male to poetically vulnerable. The piece in this show is one of the simplest, and a bit of a cross between the two poles. It consists of a twenty-one-unit sequence of the numbers, laid out in a diagonal line, each resting on a brick of plastic-wrapped clay. The clay has an appealing transformative presence—in a symbolic, Beusyian way—but the work's installation on a roped-off red linoleum floor makes it all unnecessarily coy. Through Jan. 26. (SteinGladstone, 99 Wooster St. Closed Dec. 26-29.)

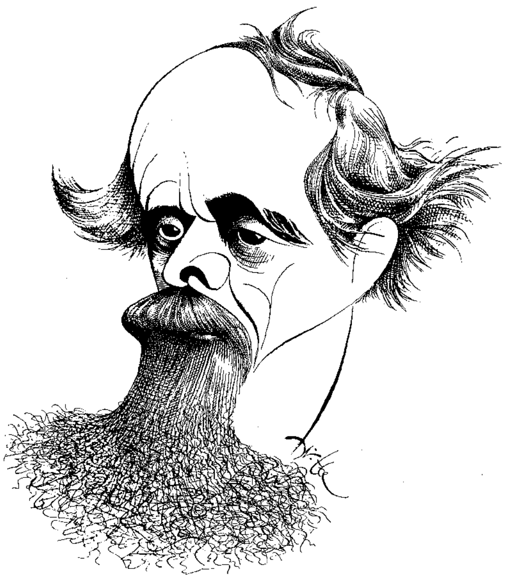
**Ellen Phelan**—A beautiful and substantial show of small recent gouaches, in exquisitely delicate colors, on the theme of landscape. Some are virtually figurative, others are all but abstract, and several include lambent, inky horizon lines that evoke, without rehashing, the nineteenth-century Romantic sublime. Phelan has become our foremost Whistlerian. Through Dec. 22. (Barbara Toll, 146 Greene St.)

**Alexis Smith**—Too many years have passed since this Los Angeles-based artist of evocative narratives has exhibited in New York. Her current piece, "Past Lives," done in collaboration with the writer Amy Gerstler, consists principally of a sea of used children's chairs of every sort and condition, each so rich in its evocation of a specific childhood, that they tend to be a little creepy. These chairs do not represent the ideal childhoods suggested by schoolroom blackboards, enlarged snapshots, and graphic depictions on the walls surrounding them; they are saturated with failure, grief, and loss. But for all the power of the chairs and the wall texts, there is something remote about this installation. A book that accompanies the show expresses the artist's ideas more fully. Through Dec. 29. (Baer, 476 Broome St.)

**Karen Sylvester**—There now seems to be a spectrum of artists working with cartoon characters. At one end are Kenny Scharf and Ronnie Cutrone, and at the other are Meyer Vaisman and Karen Sylvester. (Richard Prince, with his joke paintings, seems to stand at the center.) Here, Sylvester has enlarged photographs of people with goofy expressions and painted on them a sea of lesser-known cartoon creatures, from the eighteenth century to the present. These paintings are funny, but there's also something brutal about them. One particularly riotous work depicts a shouting match among all sorts of figures. Through Dec. 22. (303 Gallery, 89 Greene St.)

**David Wojnarowicz**—This artist did not receive much attention until he contracted AIDS and began making art that eloquently expressed his anger at our society and the way it deals with the disease. But, as this retrospective exhibition of paintings and painted objects makes clear, Wojnarowicz has been practicing his own form of guerrilla politics from the start. If you expect his paintings to open a discussion about painting you are certain to be disappointed: but if you view them as a kind of magical visual poetry you are likely to find a strange, disturbing, and horrifically beautiful world. A look at some of his writing, a few examples of which appear in the catalogue, could serve as a starting point. Wojnarowicz began his artistic life on the street, but, unlike his peers Haring and Holzer, he chose the streets because he grew up on them. There is something of the wild child to his work—much of it fixates on such boy imagery as dinosaurs, skeletons, machines, and sweaty sex. As Wojnarowicz's illness has brought the work a greater urgency and forced him into the larger public eye, the spirit of the boy has remained, bolstered in some odd way by wisdom. His fierce independence is the source of the work's strength. Through Jan. 19. (Exit Art, 578 Broadway. Closed Dec. 26-29.)

**"Work in Progress? Work?"**—Once again the Rosen gallery is functioning as an alternative space, this time by tapping into a younger generation of process artists. Two of the artists have turned the tables: Laurie Parsons is working for the gallery for the duration of the exhibition, and Linda Montano will come in a few times to clean the floors and the bathrooms. Matthew McCaslin has built a little studio and storage space. For the observer the atmosphere in this slick gallery space is very bizarre, like watching the boy in the plastic bubble. Sean Landers is represented by his maniacally entertaining videotapes of himself in a process of perpetual change, reworking his appearance so that he wavers between Charles Manson and Jim Morrison. Through Jan. [illegible]. . . . ¶ In the rear gallery is an installation by Mitchell Kane that simulates a self-service counter. Although somewhat dull, [illegible] includes some attractive paintings of lists of ingredients for such dishes as "Sesame Quailbirds with Batger's Orange Jelly," with enamel surfaces as slick and mesmerizing as surfboards. Through Jan. 5. (130 Prince St. Gallery is closed Dec. 26-29.)



*Charles Dickens at the New York Public Library*

**"The Definitive Contemporary American Quilt"**—Fifty-three examples by quiltmakers from around the country, in a show meant to dispel the usual assumptions about the medium. There's nothing here that you'd curl up under. Materials include everything from quills and buttons to watercolor and acrylic. Ten of the forty-eight artists represented are men. And such techniques as welding, photographic transfer, and assemblage replace time-honored stitchery. Among the many innovative works is Joanne Hammer's "Arcadian Myths," a tracery of metal strips painted in muted tones; within a border of a repetitive image of a fish is a leafy abstract landscape with animal and plant life. So sculptural is the piece that a viewer may well ask—as you do of other works—why quilt? Bernice Steinbaum would say, "We're just talking about artists with extended palettes." Through Jan. 5. (Steinbaum, 132 Greene St.)

**Group Show**—Old works by Mel Bochner, new works by Peter Halley, and a refreshing surprise: recent assemblages by Robert Rauschenberg. Made of battered urban metallica, these pieces are fluid, poetic, and assured. Through Dec. 22. (Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway.)

**Short List**—**PHOEBE ADAMS** and **MARK TANSEY,** Marcus, 578 Broadway (through Dec. 22); **POLLY APFELBAUM,** Lipton, 67 Prince St. (through Dec. 21); **DEBORAH BUTTERFIELD,** Thorp, 103 Prince St. (through Jan. 19, except Dec. 26-29); **DALE CHIHULY,** Cowles, 420 West Broadway (through Dec. 29); **JACK GOLDSTEIN,** Weber, 142 Greene St. (through Dec. 22); **RODNEY GRAHAM,** Burgin, 130 Prince St. (through Dec. 22); **GERTRUDE GLASS GREENE** and **BALCOMB GREENE,** Perlow, 560 Broadway (through Dec. 29); **KEITH HARING** and **JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT,** Shafrazi, 130 Prince St. (through Jan. 26, except Dec. 22-29); **BRUCE KURLAND,** Munroe, 130 Prince St. (through Jan. 19, except Dec. 26-29); **JEAN LOWE** and **GARY PANTER,** Gracie Mansion Gallery, 532 Broadway (through Jan. 12, except Dec. 26-29); **ROBERT MASON,** Katzen, 475 Broome St. (through Dec. 29); **HELMUT MIDDENDORF,** Nosei, 100 Prince St. (through Jan. 12); **CLAES OLDENBURG AND COOSJE VAN BRUGGEN,** Castelli, 420 West Broadway (through Jan. 12, except Dec. 21-29); **DAVID PARRISH,** Meisel, 141 Prince St. (through Jan. 25, except Dec. 26-29); **LEO RABKIN,** Pearl, 420 West Broadway (through Dec. 28); **JUDY RIFKA,** Alexander, 59 Wooster St. (through Jan. 5, except Dec. 26); **FRANK STELLA,** 65 Thompson Street Gallery (through Jan. 26, except Dec. 21-29); **ROBERT WATTS,** Castelli, 578 Broadway (through Jan. 12, except Dec. 21-29).

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# PHOTOGRAPHY

PIERRE ET GILLES take the cake. Their colorized, Hollywoodized, eroticized photographs have been seen a lot in Europe, but except for one appearance in a local group show this is the first time we've had a chance to view what they do first hand. As a friend of ours said, "There's got to be a limit, and this is it." Pierre et Gilles go right to the edge of so many subjects; their work asks to be loved by some and hated by others.

In their first solo show in America (Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Avenue, at 70th Street; through January 8—closed December 22 and 24) these two artists, whose hallmark is high-tech painted photography, concentrate on imagery that illustrates, in an inimitable way, the stories of saints. The small booklet that's been produced for the exhibition contains a useful and intelligent text by Simon Watney, a British critic known for his astuteness on the subject of representation and AIDS. Watney prefaces his essay with a citation from Truman Capote's "Other Voices, Other Rooms:" "We work in the dark, we do what we can, we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion, and our passion is our task." These words seem tailor-made for Pierre et Gilles, especially for their pictures of saints.

Pierre et Gilles are certainly not alone in their use of Pop, camp, and kitsch styles. What is unique is the seamless, over-the-top way in which they integrate those elements. Their models are often taken from the worlds of fashion and art; Paloma Picasso and Jean-Paul Gaultier are among those who have posed for them. In this exhibition, their casting of another French artist, Christian Boltanski—who is respected for his subtle, moving works on the Holocaust—has a special resonance. In the Pierre et Gilles photograph he is Saint Vincent de Paul. We see him in a black habit, holding a baby, and with his eyes looking up, in the reverent gesture of many figures of religious art. Snow is falling, in a fake picturesque scene that recalls snow globes.

**ILSE BING**—Collages made up of bits and pieces of the artist's photographs, as well as safety pins, colored glass, wire, and fragments of mirrors. Through Dec. 29. (Min-Lowinsky, 584 Broadway.)

**JAN GROOVER**—This show of recent color compositions of bottles, bones, and pears, among other things, soars with the notion of possibilities. It's as if the artist's commitment to still-life over the years were being repaid by objects that appreciated her looking. Through Dec. 29. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

**SHORT LIST**—**ANSEL ADAMS,** International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (open Tuesdays, except Christmas, noon to 8; Wednesdays through Fridays, noon to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6; through Feb. 3); **THEODORE BECK,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 22); **KEITH CARTER,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway (opens at noon on Saturdays, through Jan. 12); **LYNN GEESAMAN,** P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway (through Dec. 22); **ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ** and **MICHAEL SPANO,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. (through Dec. 29); **GEORGE PLATT LYNES** and **MITCHELL SYROP,** Lieberman & Saul, 155 Spring St. (opens at noon on Saturdays, through Dec. 22); **IRVING PENN,** Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 19, except Dec. 22-26); **EZRA STOLLER,** Seagram Building, fourth floor, 375 Park Ave., at 52nd St. (closed Saturdays, through Jan. 25).

# MUSIC

BEETHOVEN, wrote the composer Arrigo Boito in 1865, was the greatest of all musicians; "Bach," he said, "comes up to his chest, Mendelssohn to his heart, Schumann to his elbow, Haydn to his knee, Wagner to the clavicle of his foot." Mendelssohn: who in the world would place him so high today? (And where is Mozart?)

But much of the nineteenth century thought Mendelssohn the successor of Bach and Beethoven, even perhaps an improvement on them. This was especially so in England: like Haydn, very importantly, Mendelssohn crossed the Channel. He accompanied Queen Victoria and gave her some lessons; he composed for London and for the choral festivals; he travelled (reaching, with famous results, the Hebrides); he even promised to write an opera for the darling of the London stage, Jenny Lind. Nothing came of that: he was already ill when the time came for concrete plans to be laid, and he died without ever writing an opera. It was Verdi who pitched his tent on the Thames, as his assistant Emmanuele Muzio put it, to write for Lind, but this was a disappointing alternative.

Mendelssohn, though, had already written for Lind. The most celebrated note in her ravishing but unequal voice was the upper F-sharp. Verdi took care to provide for it prominently in "I Masnadieri." Mendelssohn had especially admired it in his own song, "Leise zieht durch mein Gemüth," and in "Elijah" he wrote an aria that exploits it continuously, to the discomfort of sopranos since: "Hear ye, Israel."

Mendelssohn's lesser status today may be materially connected with the decline of oratorio singing as a social activity. All choristers over a certain age still know "Elijah" by heart, almost as well as they do "Messiah." The former is not quite a rarity even yet, but it's going in that direction, and its appearance on the current New York Philharmonic programs is a matter for comment. Leonard Bernstein was to have directed; Kurt Masur, the orchestra's future music director, who is heir to the traditions of Mendelssohn's own Leipzig, will take his place.

"Elijah" is really "Elias," composed to German words but with translation into English for England foreseen from the start. The thoughtless folk who want everything forced into its original language have, luckily, been asleep at the switch in this instance; the Philharmonic performances will be in the language of Shakespeare, Milton, and the Bible.

*(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Avery Fisher Hall 874-2424; and for Carnegie Hall 247-7800.)*

## OPERA

**METROPOLITAN OPERA**—**FAUST,** with Diana Soviero, Susan Quittmeyer, Neil Rosenshein, Gino Quilico, and James Morris; conducted by Thomas Fulton. (Dec. 17, Dec. 21, and Dec. 24, all at 8.) . . . **SEMIRAMIDE,** with June Anderson, Marilyn Horne, Chris Merritt, and Samuel Ramey; James Conlon. (Dec. 18 and Dec. 26 at 7:30, and Dec. 22 at 8.) . . . **ANDREA CHÉNIER,** with Aprile Millo, Camellia Johnson, Nicola Martinucci, and Sherrill Milnes; Julius Rudel. (Dec. 19 at 8 and Dec. 22 at 1.) . . . **SALOME,** with Stephanie Sundine, Helga Dernesch, Graham Clark, and Ekkehard Wlaschiha; James Conlon. (Dec. 20 at 8:30.)

*George Frideric Handel*

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

**NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC**—Kurt Masur directs Mendelssohn's "Elijah," with the Westminster Symphonic Choir and soloists Edith Wiens (soprano), Marietta Simpson (mezzo-soprano), Richard Leech (tenor), and Kevin McMillan (baritone). (Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 18 at 7:30, and Dec. 20-22 at 8.)

**"BEETHOVEN: OUT OF HIS TIME"**—Conductor Robert Kapilow underscores the radical nature of Beethoven's First Piano Concerto, written in 1795, by presenting it in the context of two contemporaneous works (both in their New York premières): Jan Ladislav Dussek's E-Flat-Major Concerto (1791) and Muzio Clementi's C-Major Concerto (1793). With the Rutgers SummerFest orchestra, and piano soloists Ilana Vered (in the Beethoven), Jonathan Irving (in the Dussek), and Florence Millet (in the Clementi). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Dec. 19 at 8.)

**BARGEMUSIC**—Bach's First, Second, and Fourth "Brandenburg" Concertos, performed by an ensemble that includes flutist Michael Parloff, oboist Steven Taylor, and trumpeter Stephen Burns; and a continuo group comprising cellist Fred Sherry, bassoonist Dennis Godburn, double-bass player Lewis Paer, and harpsichordist John Gibbons. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Dec. 20 and Dec. 24 at 7:30.)

**NEW YORK STRING ORCHESTRA**—Alexander Schneider conducts his ensemble of young musicians in a Christmas Eve concert of Haydn's Symphony No. 88, Wolf's "Italian Serenade," and Mozart's Concertone for Two Violins, K. 190. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 24 at midnight.)

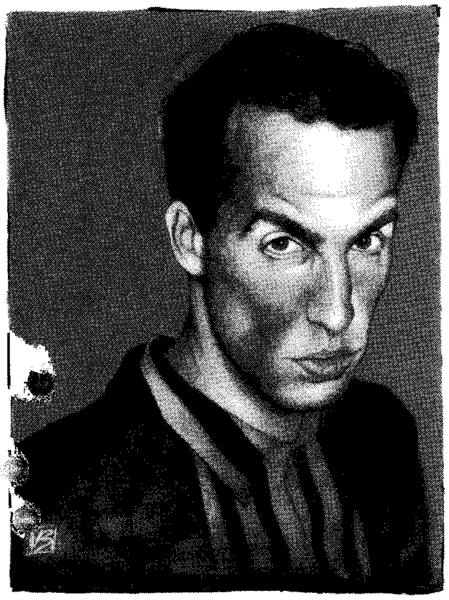
**"CHRISTMAS RAPPINGS"**—Michael Kelly directing Al Carmines' staged oratorio. (Judson Memorial Church, 55 Washington Sq. S. 777-003 Dec. 17 and Dec. 19-22, all at 8.)

**ASCENSION MUSIC**—Dennis Keene directs the Ascension Music Chorus and Orchestra, the New York Cornet and Sacbut Ensemble, and vocal soloists in Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610. (Church of the Ascension, Fifth Ave. at 10th St. 254-8553. Dec. 18 at 8.)

**NEW YORK CITY GAY MEN'S CHORUS**—Gary Miller directs premières of two works by William Bolcom, as well as music by Leonard Bernstein, Conrad Susa, and others. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 18-19 at 8.)

**LINCOLN CENTER CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION**—Hugh Wolff conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's, with mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade, flutist James Galway, and the Vienna Choir Boys. (Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 19 at 8:30.)

**ST. CECILIA CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA**—David Randolph directs Bach's "Christmas Oratorio," with Judith Nicosia (soprano), Antoinette



*John Lurie (of the Lounge Lizards)*

Hardin (mezzo-soprano), Grayson Hirst (tenor), and Michael Burt (bass). (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 22 at 8.)

**Cathedral of St. John the Divine**—The Cathedral's Choristers, directed by Johnson Flucker, perform traditional and contemporary carols (including an audience sing-along). (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. Dec. 23 at 3:30. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

**Handel's "Messiah"**—**oratorio society of new york:** Lyndon Woodside directing. With Brenda Harris (soprano), Rebecca Russell (mezzo-soprano), Michael Schade (tenor), and Michael Burt (bass). (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 17 at 8.) . . . **musica viva:** Walter Klauss directs a sing-along, with an orchestra. (All Souls Unitarian Church, Lexington Ave. at 80th St. Dec. 18 at 7:30. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.) . . . **canterbury choral society:** Charles Dodsley Walker directing a sing-along of the Christmas section, with an orchestra. (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. Dec. 19 at 8. For information about tickets, call 289-3402.) . . . **hudson chamber symphony and chorus:** Gary M. Schneider directs the Christmas section only, as well as the "Cantata de Navidad" by Juan Orrego-Salas. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 751-1616, ext. 226. Dec. 19 at 8.) . . . **musica sacra:** Richard Westenburg directing the chorus and orchestra, with Steffanie Pearce (soprano), Axel Köhler (countertenor), Steven Tharp (tenor), and Paul Rowe (baritone). (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 20-21 at 8.)

### RECITALS

**Jorja Fleezanis**—Violinist, and friends, play twentieth-century works by Ives, Enescu, Aaron Jay Kernis, and Robert Helps. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Dec. 17 at 8.)

**Horacio Franco**—Playing a variety of recorders, in works dedicated to him by six contemporary Mexican composers. (Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. Dec. 18 at 7. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

**nnett Lerner**—The pianist performs a soirée of Dukas, Ravel, Debussy, Chausson, Fauré, and Poulenc. (Bösendorfer Center, 406 E. 79th St. Dec. 18 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

**Composers Circle**—Works by six members and friends of this composers' collective, conducted by Mimi Stern-Wolfe. Presented by Downtown Music Productions. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. Dec. 18 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

**Aulos Ensemble**—The period-instrument quintet, with harpist Lynne Aspnes and members of the Riverside Choir (directed by John Walker), in a program of Telemann, Vivaldi, Bach, and Britten ("A Ceremony of Carols"). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Dec. 20 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

**Victoria Jordanova**—Harp, performs works by Tailleferre, Rochberg, and others; assisted by flutist Patricia Kaczmarczyk. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. Dec. 20 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

**Wright-Tree-Batlle Trio**—Clarinettist Harold Wright, violist Michael Tree, and pianist Luis Batlle perform chamber music by Mozart and Schumann. (Washington Irving High School, Irving Pl. at 16th St. Dec. 22 at 8. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.)

**Pomerium Musices and Calliope: A Renaissance Band**—Alexander Blachly directs works by Dufay, Isaac, Senfl, Byrd, and others. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Dec. 23 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

**P. D. Q. Bach**—"Professor" Peter Schickele and his ensemble illuminate the varied facets of the most baroque composer of them all, in a program that includes the dramatic oratorio "Oedipus Tex" and the cantata "Knock-Knock." (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 26, Dec. 28, and Dec. 30, all at 8.)

### JAZZ / POP / ROCK PERSONAL APPEARANCES

**Lounge Lizards**—Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Dec. 18 at 8.

**Steve Turre Ensemble**—With Wynton Marsalis, Buster Williams, Mulgrew Miller, and others. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Dec. 20 at 8.)

**Inkhay**—Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Dec. 22 at 8.

## SPORTS

### HOME TEAMS

**Giants**—Away for the rest of the season.

**Jets**—Vs. the New England Patriots, Dec. 23 at 1.

**Rangers**—Vs. the Washington Capitals, Dec. 17. . . . ¶ Vs. the Toronto Maple Leafs, Dec. 19. . . . ¶ Vs. the Boston Bruins, Dec. 23. (Game time, 7:30.)

**Islanders**—Vs. the Toronto Maple Leafs, Dec. 18. . . . ¶ Vs. the Hartford Whalers, Dec. 20. . . . ¶ Vs. the Pittsburgh Penguins, Dec. 22. (Game time, 7:35.)

**Devils**—Vs. the Boston Bruins, Dec. 18. . . . ¶ Vs. the Toronto Maple Leafs, Dec. 23. (Game time, 7:45.)

**Knicks**—Vs. the Los Angeles Lakers, Dec. 18 at 8. . . . ¶ Vs. the Nets, Dec. 22 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Portland Trailblazers, Dec. 26 at 7:30.

**Nets**—Vs. the Utah Jazz, Dec. 17. . . . ¶ Vs. the Los Angeles Clippers, Dec. 19. . . . ¶ Vs. the Cleveland Cavaliers, Dec. 21. . . . ¶ Vs. the Atlanta Hawks, Dec. 26. (Game time, 7:30.)

(The Jets play at Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands; for information about Jets tickets, call 1-516 538-6600. The Rangers and the Knicks play at Madison Square Garden, 563-8300; the Islanders at the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300; and the Devils and the Nets at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

### RACING

**Horses**—At Aqueduct: Daily, except Tuesdays and Dec. 24, at 12:30. . . . **trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights, except Dec. 24, at 8, and Tuesdays, except Christmas, at 1.

## ABOVE AND BEYOND

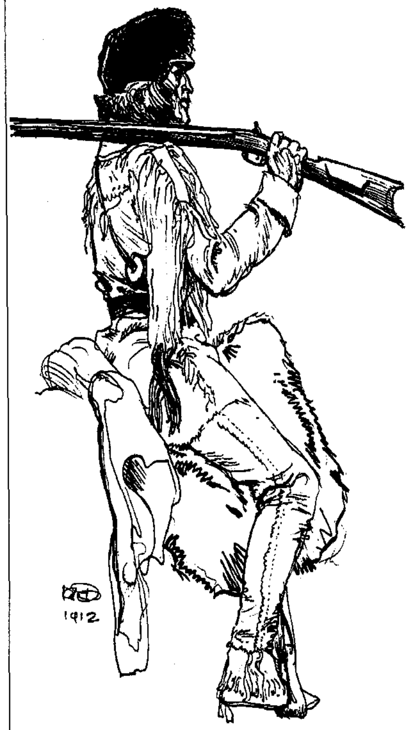
**Winter**—This year, the solstice is at 10:07 p.m. on Dec. 21, and the people at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine are planning a party: music by the Paul Winter Consort; singing by Noirin Ni Riain, from Ireland; an enormous tam-tam; and a canvas "Earth Ball." (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 662-2133. Dec. 20-21 at 8, and Dec. 22 at 2 and 8.)

**Flower Show**—Poinsettias are the center of attention at this exhibition, which reconstructs Christmas at a Southern plantation house. Also adorning an antebellum porch and gazebo are camellias, calla lilies, and paper-whites. (Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave., near Grand Army Plaza. Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 4. Through Jan. 2.)

**Carollers**—Costumed members of the Manhattan Opera Association will be singing in Grand Central Terminal Dec. 18-20, starting at noon. Fa la la la la, la la la la.

**Reading**—Some of Zora Neale Hurston's works will be read aloud by Ossie Davis, Paul Robeson, Jr., Henry Louis Gates, and others in honor of the writer who would have turned a hundred in January. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. Dec. 20 at 8. For information about tickets, call 787-6557.)

MAYNARD DIXON



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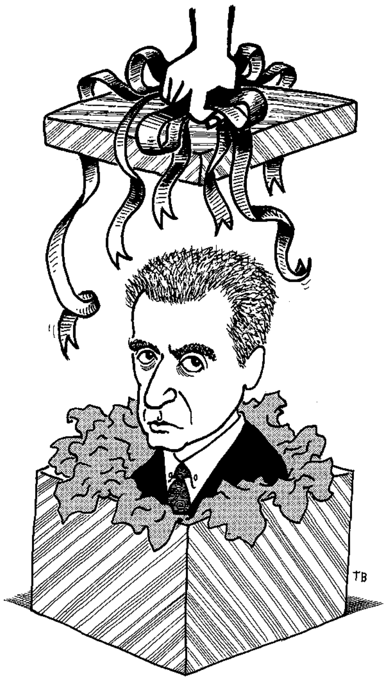
# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



*Al Pacino: “The Godfather Part III”*

## THE MOVIE HOUSES

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| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | | | |

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 24.

### EAST SIDE

**Angelika Film Center,** 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: “To Sleep with Anger” (†).
Theatre 2: Through Dec. 22: “Metropolitan” (directed by Whit Stillman), with Edward Clements, Carolyn Farina, Christopher Eigeman, and Taylor Nichols. From Dec. 23: “Come See the Paradise” (Alan Parker), *with Dennis Quaid and Tamlyn* Tomita.
Theatre 3: Through Dec. 24: “Hidden Agenda” (Ken Loach), with Frances McDormand, Brian Cox, and Brad Dourif. From Dec. 25: “Vincent & Theo” (†).
Theatre 4: “Mermaids” (Richard Benjamin), with Cher, Bob Hoskins, Winona Ryder, and Christina Ricci.
Theatre 5: Through Dec. 18: “C’est la Vie” (Diane Kurys), with Nathalie Baye and Richard Berry. From Dec. 19: “The Russia House” (Fred Schepisi), with Sean Connery, Michelle Pfeiffer, Roy Scheider, and James Fox.
Theatre 6: Through Dec. 18: “Tune in Tomorrow . . .” (†). From Dec. 19: “The Russia House.”

**Public Theatre,** 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
(Separate admissions) “Company” (1970, D. A. Pennebaker), with Dean Jones, Barbara Barrie, and George Coe; and “She’s Been Away” (1989, Peter Hall), with Peggy Ashcroft, Geraldine James, and James Fox.

**Movieland 8th Street Triplex,** 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: “Home Alone” (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.
Theatre 2: “Look Who’s Talking Too” (Amy Heckerling), with John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, and Olympia Dukakis.
Theatre 3: Through Dec. 20: “GoodFellas” (†). From Dec. 21: “The Bonfire of the Vanities” (Brian De Palma), with Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, and Melanie Griffith.

**Loews 19th Street East 6,** B’way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: Through Dec. 18: “Hidden Agenda” (Ken Loach), with Frances McDormand, Brian Cox, and Brad Dourif. From Dec. 19: “The Russia House” (Fred Schepisi), with Sean Connery, Michelle Pfeiffer, Roy Scheider, and James Fox.
Theatre 2: “Dances with Wolves” (†).
Theatre 3: “The Rookie” (Clint Eastwood), with Eastwood and Charlie Sheen.
Theatre 4: Through Dec. 18: “Reversal of Fortune” (†). From Dec. 19: “Almost an Angel” (John Cornell), with Paul Hogan.
Theatre 5: Through Dec. 24: “Dances with Wolves” (†). From Dec. 25: “The Godfather Part III” (Francis Ford Coppola), *with Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire,* and Andy Garcia.
Theatre 6: “Look Who’s Talking Too” (Amy Heckerling), with John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, and Olympia Dukakis.

**Gramercy,** Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
“Three Men and a Little Lady” (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.

**Bay Cinema,** 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
“Home Alone” (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.

**Murray Hill Cinemas,** 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: From Dec. 21: “The Bonfire of the Vanities” (Brian De Palma), with Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, and Melanie Griffith.
Theatre 2: From Dec. 21: “The Bonfire of the Vanities.”
Theatre 3: From Dec. 21: “The Sheltering Sky” (†).
Theatre 4: From Dec. 21: “The Field” (Jim Sheridan), with Richard Harris, John Hurt, Tom Berenger, Brenda Fricker, and Sean Bean.

**Loews 34th Street Showplace,** 238 E. 34th. (532-5544).
Theatre 1: Through Dec. 24: “Ghost” (†). From Dec. 25: “The Godfather Part III” (Francis Ford Coppola), with Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, and Andy Garcia.
Theatre 2: Through Dec. 18: “Predator 2” (Stephen Hopkins), with Danny Glover and Gary Busey. From Dec. 19: “Almost an Angel” (John Cornell), with Paul Hogan.
Theatre 3: “Mermaids” (Richard Benjamin) with Cher, Bob Hoskins, Winona Ryder, and Christina Ricci.

**34th St. East,** 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
Through Dec. 19: “White Palace” (Luis Mandoki), with Susan Sarandon and James Spader.
From Dec. 20: “Awakenings” (Penny Marshall), with Robert De Niro and Robin Williams.

**Eastside Cinema,** 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
“Reversal of Fortune” (†).

**Sutton 1 and 2,** 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: “Three Men and a Little Lady” (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.
Theatre 2: Through Dec. 20: “GoodFellas” (†). From Dec. 21: “The Bonfire of the Vanities” (Brian De Palma), with Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, and Melanie Griffith.

**Gotham Cinema,** 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
Through Dec. 22: “Predator 2” (Stephen Hopkins), with Danny Glover and Gary Busey.
From Dec. 23: “Come See the Paradise” (Alan Parker), with Dennis Quaid and Tamlyn Tomita.

**Plaza,** 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
“Cyrano de Bergerac” (Jean-Paul Rappeneau; in French), with Gérard Depardieu.

**Manhattan Twin,** 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: “Misery” (Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates.
Theatre 2: Through Dec. 20: “Misery.” From Dec. 21: “Kindergarten Cop” (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

**59th Street East Cinema,** 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
Through Dec. 18: “White Palace” (Luis Mandoki), with Susan Sarandon and James Spader.
From Dec. 19: “Almost an Angel” (John Cornell), with Paul Hogan.

**Baronet and Coronet,** 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: Through Dec. 19: “Henry & June” (†). From Dec. 20: “Home Alone” (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.
Theatre 2: Through Dec. 19: “Home Alone.” From Dec. 20: “Awakenings” (Penny Marshall), with Robert De Niro and Robin Williams.

**Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue,** 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: Through Dec. 24: Theatre closed. From Dec. 25: “Green Card” (Peter Weir), with Gérard Depardieu and Andie MacDowell.
Theatre 2: “Mr. & Mrs. Bridge” (†).
Theatre 3: (Matinées only) “The Rescuers Down Under” (Hendel Butoy and Mike Gabriel), an animated film; and (evenings only) “Mr. & Mrs. Bridge” (†).

**Gemini 1 and 2,** 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: “Look Who’s Talking Too” (Amy Heckerling), with John Travolta, Ki[illegible]e Alley, and Olympia Dukakis.
Theatre 2: “The Rookie” (Clint Eastwood), with Eastwood and Charlie Sheen.

**Beekman,** 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
“Havana” (Sydney Pollack), with Robert Redford and Lena Olin.

**Loews New York Twin,** 2nd Ave. at 67th. (74[illegible]7339)
Theatre 1: Through Dec. 18: “Rocky V” (John G. Avildsen), with Sylvester Stallone. From Dec. 19: “The Russia House” (Fred Schepisi), with Sean Connery, Michelle Pfeiffer, Roy Scheider, and James Fox.
Theatre 2: Through Dec. 24: “Hidden Agenda” (Ken Loach), with Frances McDormand, Brian Cox, and Brad Dourif. From Dec. 25: “The Godfather Part III” (Francis Ford Coppola), with Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, and Andy Garcia.

**68th St. Playhouse,** 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
Through Dec. 18: “Reversal of Fortune” (†).
From Dec. 19: “Hamlet” (Franco Zeffirelli), with Mel Gibson, Glenn Close, Alan Bates, and Paul Scofield.

**Loews Tower East,** 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
“Dances with Wolves” (†).

**U. A. East,** 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
Through Dec. 24: “GoodFellas” (†).
From Dec. 25: “The Godfather Part III” (Francis Ford Coppola), with Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, and Andy Garcia.

**Park & 86th Street Cinemas,** 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: Through Dec. 20: “Predator 2” (Stephen Hopkins), with Danny Glover and Gary Busey. From Dec. 21: “Kindergarten Cop” (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.
Theatre 2: “Misery” (Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates.

**86th Street East Twin,** 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: “The Rookie” (Clint Eastwood), with Eastwood and Charlie Sheen.
Theatre 2: “Three Men and a Little Lady” (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.

### WEST SIDE

**Film Forum,** 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through Dec. 18: “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” (directed by Fernando Birri; in Spanish), with Birri. From Dec. 19: “From Russia with Rock” (1988, Marjaana Mykkanen; in Russian and English).
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: (Separate admissions) “Kiss Me Kate” (1953, George Sidney), with Kathryn Grayson, Howard Keel, Ann Miller, and Keenan Wynne; and “Akira” (Katsuhiro Otomo), a Japanese animated *science-fiction film.*

**Waverly 1 and 2,** 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: “Misery” (Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates.
Theatre 2: Through Dec. 20: “The Krays” (†). From Dec. 21: “Kindergarten Cop” (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

**8th St. Playhouse,** 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
“Reversal of Fortune” (†).

**Art Greenwich Twin,** Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: Through Dec. 24: “Henry & June” (†). From Dec. 25: “The Godfather Part III” (Francis Ford Coppola), with Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, and Andy Garcia.
Theatre 2: “Havana” (Sydney Pollack), with Robert Redford and Lena Olin.

**Quad Cinema,** 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)

Theatre 1: "Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.

Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "The Rescuers Down Under" (Hendel Butoy and Mike Gabriel), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Cinema Paradiso" (Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian), with Philippe Noiret and Salvatore Cascio.

Theatre 3: "The Rookie" (Clint Eastwood), with Eastwood and Charlie Sheen.

Theatre 4: "My Twentieth Century" (Ildiko Enyedi; in Hungarian).

**Chelsea Cinemas,** 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)

Theatre 1: "Misery" (Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates.

Theatre 2: "Havana" (Sydney Pollack), with Robert Redford and Lena Olin.

Theatre 3: "Henry & June" (†).

Theatre 4: Through Dec. 20: "Predator 2" (Stephen Hopkins), with Danny Glover and Gary Busey. From Dec. 21: "The Bonfire of the Vanities" (Brian De Palma), with Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, and Melanie Griffith.

Theatre 5: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.

Theatre 6: Through Dec. 20: "Misery." From Dec. 21: "Kindergarten Cop" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Theatre 7: Through Dec. 22: "The Krays" (†). From Dec. 23: "Come See the Paradise" (Alan Parker), with Dennis Quaid and Tamlyn Tomita.

Theatre 8: Through Dec. 20: "Home Alone." From Dec. 21: "The Long Walk Home" (Richard Pearce), with Sissy Spacek and Whoopi Goldberg.

Theatre 9: "Mermaids" (Richard Benjamin), with Cher, Bob Hoskins, Winona Ryder, and Christina Ricci.

**23rd St. West Triplex,** 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)

Theatre 1: "White Palace" (Luis Mandoki), with Susan Sarandon and James Spader.

Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "The Rescuers Down Under" (Hendel Butoy and Mike Gabriel), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Rocky V" (John G. Avildsen), with Sylvester Stallone.

Theatre 3: "Ghost" (†).

**Guild,** 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)

Through Dec. 18: "The Rescuers Down Under" (Hendel Butoy and Mike Gabriel), an animated film.

From Dec. 19: "The Russia House" (Fred Schepisi), with Sean Connery, Michelle Pfeiffer, Roy Scheider, and James Fox.

**Worldwide Cinemas,** 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)

Theatre 1: "Henry & June" (†).

Theatre 2: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.

Theatre 3: Through Dec. 20: "White Palace" (Luis Mandoki), with Susan Sarandon and James Spader. From Dec. 21: "Kindergarten Cop" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Theatre 4: "Avalon" (†).

Theatre 5: "The Krays" (†).

Theatre 6: "Postcards from the Edge" (†).

**Ziegfeld,** 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)

"Edward Scissorhands" (†).

**Loews Festival,** 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)

"Mermaids" (Richard Benjamin), with Cher, Bob Hoskins, Winona Ryder, and Christina Ricci.

**57th St. Playhouse,** 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)

"The Sheltering Sky" (†).

**Carnegie Hall Cinema,** 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)

Through Dec. 20: "C'est la Vie" (Diane Kurys), with Nathalie Baye and Richard Berry.

From Dec. 21: "The Long Walk Home" (Richard Pearce), with Sissy Spacek and Whoopi Goldberg.

**Carnegie Screening Room,** 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (757-2131)

"Cinema Paradiso" (Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian), with Philippe Noiret.

**Loews Fine Arts,** 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)

Through Dec. 24: "Vincent & Theo" (†).

From Dec. 25: "Alice" (Woody Allen), with Mia Farrow and William Hurt.

**Cinema 3,** 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)

"Tune in Tomorrow . . ." (†).

**Loews Paramount,** B'way at 61st. (247-5070)

"Dances with Wolves" (†).

**62nd & Broadway,** 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)

Through Dec. 19: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.

From Dec. 20: "Awakenings" (Penny Marshall), with Robert De Niro and Robin Williams.

**Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3,** B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)

Theatre 1: "The Nasty Girl" (Michael Verhoeven; in German), with Lena Stolze.

Theatre 2: "Freeze—Die—Come to Life" (Vitaly Kanevski; in Russian).

Theatre 3: "L'Atalante" (†).

**Regency,** B'way at 67th. (724-3700)

"Havana" (Sydney Pollack), with Robert Redford and Lena Olin.

**Loews 84th Street Sixplex,** B'way at 84th. (877-3600)

Theatre 1: "Mermaids" (Richard Benjamin), with Cher, Bob Hoskins, Winona Ryder, and Christina Ricci.

Theatre 2: "Look Who's Talking Too" (Amy Heckerling), with John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, and Olympia Dukakis.

Theatre 3: Through Dec. 18: "GoodFellas" (†). From Dec. 19: "The Russia House" (Fred Schepisi), with Sean Connery, Michelle Pfeiffer, Roy Scheider, and James Fox.

Theatre 4: Through Dec. 20: "Reversal of Fortune" (†). From Dec. 21: "The Bonfire of the Vanities" (Brian De Palma), with Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, and Melanie Griffith.

Theatre 5: Through Dec. 18: "Hidden Agenda" (Ken Loach), with Frances McDormand, Brian Cox, and Brad Dourif. From Dec. 19: "Almost an Angel" (John Cornell), with Paul Hogan.

Theatre 6: Through Dec. 24: "The Rookie" (Clint Eastwood), with Eastwood and Charlie Sheen. From Dec. 25: "The Godfather Part III" (Francis Ford Coppola), with Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, and Andy Garcia.

**Metro Cinema 1 and 2,** B'way at 99th. (222-1200)

Theatre 1: "Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.

Theatre 2: Through Dec. 20: (Matinées only) "The Rescuers Down Under" (Hendel Butoy and Mike Gabriel), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Henry & June" (†). From Dec. 21: "Kindergarten Cop" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

**Olympia I and II,** B'way at 107th. (865-8128)

Theatre 1: "Predator 2" (Stephen Hopkins), with Danny Glover and Gary Busey.

Theatre 2: "Misery" (Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates.

## TIMES SQUARE AREA

**Criterion Center,** B'way at 44th. (354-0900)

Theatre 1: "Marked for Death" (directed by Dwight H. Little), with Steven Seagal, Joanna Pacula, and Keith David.

Theatre 2: "Predator 2" (Stephen Hopkins), with Danny Glover and Gary Busey.

Theatre 3: Through Dec. 20: "Predator 2." From Dec. 21: "The Bonfire of the Vanities" (Brian De Palma), with Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, and Melanie Griffith.

Theatre 4: "Child's Play 2" (John Lafia).

Theatre 5: "GoodFellas" (†).

Theatre 6: "Look Who's Talking Too" (Amy Heckerling), with John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, and Olympia Dukakis.

**Embassy 1,** B'way at 46th. (302-0494)

"Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.

**Embassy 2, 3, and 4,** 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)

Theatre 1: Through Dec. 18: "Graveyard Shift" (Ralph S. Singleton), with David Andrews, Kelly Wolf, Stephen Macht, and Brad Dourif. From Dec. 19: "Almost an Angel" (John Cornell), with Paul Hogan.

Theatre 2: "Mermaids" (Richard Benjamin), with Cher, Bob Hoskins, Winona Ryder, and Christina Ricci.

Theatre 3: Through Dec. 18: "Ghost" (†). From Dec. 19: (Matinées only) "The Rescuers Down Under" (Hendel Butoy and Mike Gabriel), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Ghost" (†).

**Loews Astor Plaza,** 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)

Through Dec. 24: "Rocky V" (John G. Avildsen), with Sylvester Stallone.

From Dec. 25: "The Godfather Part III" (Francis Ford Coppola), with Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, and Andy Garcia.

**National Twin,** B'way at 44th. (869-0950)

Theatre 1: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.

Theatre 2: Through Dec. 20: "Misery" (Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates. From Dec. 21: "Kindergarten Cop" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

**West Side Cinema 1 and 2,** 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)

Theatre 1: "The Rookie" (Clint Eastwood), with Eastwood and Charlie Sheen.

Theatre 2: "The Rookie."

## REVIVAL HOUSES

**Biograph Cinema,** 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)

Dec. 17: "Arise, My Love" (1940, directed by Mitchell Leisen), with Claudette Colbert, Ray Milland, Walter Abel, and Dennis O'Keefe; and "Angels Over Broadway" (1940, Ben Hecht and Lee Garmes), with Rita Hayworth, Thomas Mitchell, and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.

Dec. 18-19: "Stardust" (1940, Walter Lang), with Linda Darnell, John Payne, Roland Young, Charlotte Greenwood, and William Gargan; and "A Child Is Born" (1940, Lloyd Bacon), with Geraldine Fitzgerald, Jeffrey Lynn, Nanette Fabray, Gladys George, Spring Byington, Gale Page, and Eve Arden.

Dec. 20-22: "New Moon" (1940, Robert Z. Leonard), with Jeanette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy, and Mary Boland; and "Down Argentine Way" (1940, Irving Cummings), with Betty Grable, Don Ameche, Carmen Miranda, Charlotte Greenwood, and the Nicholas Brothers.

Dec. 23-25: "Miracle on 34th Street" (1947, George Seaton), with John Payne, Maureen O'Hara, Edmund Gwenn, and Natalie Wood; and "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946, Frank Capra), with James Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore, Gloria Grahame, Thomas Mitchell, and Henry Travers.

From Dec. 26: "An Affair to Remember" (1957, Leo McCarey), with Cary Grant, Deborah Kerr, and Richard Denning; and "Holiday" (1938, George Cukor), with Katharine Hepburn, Grant, Edward Everett Horton, Lew Ayres, and Doris Nolan.

**Cinema Village,** 3rd Ave. between 12th and 13th. (505-7320)

Through Dec. 18: "Hairspray" (1988, John Waters), with Divine, Ricki Lake, Colleen Fitzpatrick, Leslie Ann Powers, Michael St. Gerard, and Jerry Stiller; and "Pink Flamingos" (1974, Waters), with Divine.

Dec. 19-22: "Longtime Companion" (1990, Norman René), with Bruce Davidson, Mark Lamos, Campbell Scott, Stephen Caffrey, and Patrick Cassidy; and "Wild at Heart" (1990, David Lynch), with Nicolas Cage, Laura Dern, Diane Ladd, Willem Dafoe, and Harry Dean Stanton.

Dec. 23-25: "Wings of Desire" (1988, Wim Wenders; in German), with Bruno Ganz, Solveig Dommartin, and Otto Sander; and "Jesus of Montreal" (1990, Denys Arcand; in French), with Lothaire Bluteau.

From Dec. 26: "What Have I Done to Deserve This!" (1984, Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish), with Carmen Maura; and "Law of Desire" (1987, Almodóvar; in Spanish), with Maura, Eusebio Poncela, Antonio Banderas, and Miguel Molina.

**Film Forum 2,** 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)

Through Dec. 20: "Funny Face" (see page 22); and "Sabrina" (1954, Billy Wilder), with Humphrey Bogart, Audrey Hepburn, William Holden, and John Williams.

From Dec. 21: "Funny Face" (see page 22); and "Roman Holiday" (1953, William Wyler), with Audrey Hepburn, Gregory Peck, and Eddie Albert.

**Theatre 80 St. Marks,** 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)

Dec. 17: "Rashomon" (1951, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese), with Toshiro Mifune, Machiko Kyo, Masayuki Mori, and Takashi Shiumura; and "Dodes'kaden" (1971, Kurosawa; in Japanese).

Dec 18: "The Big Sleep" (1946, Howard Hawks), with Lauren Bacall, Humphrey Bogart, and Martha Vickers; and "The Kennel Murder Case" (1933, Michael Curtiz), with Mary Astor, William Powell, Helen Vinson, and Jack La Rue.

Dec. 19: "Harriet Craig" (1950, Vincent Sherman), with Joan Crawford and Wendell Corey; and "Queen Bee" (1955, Ranald MacDougall), with Crawford.

Dec. 20: "Luna" (1979, Bernardo Bertolucci), with Jill Clayburgh and Matthew Barry; and "The Conformist" (1970, Bertolucci; in Italian), with Jean-Louis Trintignant, Stefania Sandrelli, and Dominique Sanda.

Dec. 21-22: "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946, Frank Capra), with James Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore, Gloria Grahame, Thomas Mitchell, and Henry Travers; and "A Christmas Story" (1983, Bob Clark), with Melinda Dillon and Darren McGavin.

Dec. 23: "The World According to Garp" (1982, George Roy Hill), with Robin Williams, Glenn Close, Mary Beth Hurt, and John Lithgow; and "Four Friends" (1981, Arthur Penn), with Craig Wasson, Jodi Thelen, Jim Metzler, and Michael Huddleston.

Dec. 24: Theatre closed.

Dec. 25-26: "Blazing Saddles" (1974, Mel Brooks), with Cleavon Little, Gene Wilder, and Madeline Kahn; and "Silent Movie" (1976, Brooks), with Brooks, Marty Feldman, Dom DeLuise, and Sid Caesar.

## FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

**Museum of Modern Art,** Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—Dec. 17 at 3: "Interior, New York Subway, 14th Street to 42nd Street" (1904), "The Great Mail Robbery" (1906), and other early American silent films. . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 2:30: "The Summer of Miss Forbes" (1988, directed by Jaime Humberto Hermosillo; a Mexican film, in Spanish), with Hanna Schygulla. . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 6: "Looks Can Be Deceiving" (1978, Hermosillo; a Mexican film, in Spanish), with Isela Vega. . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 6: "How They Rob Men in Chicago" (1902), "European Rest Cure" (1904), and other early American silent films. . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 3: "Automobile Thieves" (1906), "The Secret of Death Valley" (1907), and other early American silent films. . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 6: "Doña Herlinda and Her Son" (1984, Hermosillo; a Mexican film, in Spanish), with Guadalupe Del Toto. . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 6: "Girls in Overalls" (1904), "The Green Goods Men" (1905), and other early American silent films. . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 2:30: "Holy Office" (1973, Arturo Ripstein; a Mexican film, in Spanish), with Jorge Luke, Diana Cracho, and Claudio Brook. . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 3 and 6:15: "Shattered Dreams: Picking Up the Pieces" (1987, Victor Schonfeld and Jennifer Millstone), a documentary. . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 6: "Bathroom Intimacy" (1990, Hermosillo; a Mexican film, in Spanish), with Gabriela Roel. . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 2:30: "Looks Can Be Deceiving." . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 3: "Laughing Gas" (1907), "Falsely Accused" (1908), and other early American silent films. . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 6: "The Children's Hour" (1969, Ripstein; a Mexican film, in Spanish), with Carlos Savage. . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 6: "Automobile Thieves," "The Secret of Death Valley," and other early American silent films. . . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 2: "Passion According to Berenice" (1976, Hermosillo; a Mexican film, in Spanish), with Martha Navarro and Pedro Armendáriz, Jr. . . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 2:30: "The Redman's View" (1909), "Captain Barnacle's Chaperone" (1910), and other early American silent films. . . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 5: "Castle of Purity" (1972, Ripstein; a Mexican film, in Spanish), with Claudio Brook and Rita Macedo. . . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 5: "Laughing Gas," "Falsely Accused," and other early American silent films. . . . ¶ Dec. 23 at 2: "Love Lies" (1988, Ripstein; a Mexican film, in Spanish), with Alonso Echanove. . . . ¶ Dec. 23 at 2:30: "The Honor of His Family" (1910), "When Lee Surrenders" (1912), and other early American silent films. . . . ¶ Dec. 23 at 5: "Matinée" (1976, Hermosillo; a Mexican film, in Spanish), with Héctor Bonilla. . . . ¶ Dec. 23 at 5: "Her Nephews from Labrador" (1912); "The Massacre" (1914, D. W. Griffith), with Blanche Sweet, Wilfrid Lucas, and Lionel Barrymore; and other early American silent films. . . . ¶ Dec. 24 at 2:30: Three 1970 Mexican films by Ripstein, in Spanish—"Crime," "Beauty," and "Exorcism." . . . ¶ Dec. 24 at 2:30: "The Redman's View," "Captain Barnacle's Chaperone," and other early American silent films.

**Museum of Broadcasting,** 1 E. 53rd St. (752-7684)—Programs about contemporary comedians and people who influenced them. Gilda Radner: Dec. 18-22: Excerpts from Radner's performances on "Saturday Night Live"; and "Lucy's Italian Movie" (1956, CBS), an episode of "I Love Lucy," with Lucille Ball. . . . ¶ From Dec. 26: Excerpts from Radner's work on television, such as "Saturday Night Live" and "Bob and Ray, Jane, Laraine & Gilda"; and episodes of, among others, "The Honeymooners," "Your Show of Shows," and "The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show." Showings Tuesdays at 12:15 and 5:30 and Wednesdays through Saturdays at 12:15.

**Florence Gould Hall,** 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Dec. 19 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "La Bohème" (1988, Luigi Comencini; in Italian), with Barbara Hendricks.

**Anthology Film Archives,** 32-34 Second Ave., at Second St. (477-2714)—Dec. 19-23 at 7: "100 N.Y., N.Y. 1989" (Kyle Jibbe) and "Turn Here Sweet Corn" (1990, Helen De Michiel). . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 9: "Shagai, Soviet!" (1926, Dziga Vertov; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 10: "A Sixth of the World" (1926, Vertov; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ Dec. 21-22 at 8:30: "The Rumanian Brancusi" (1976, Sean Hudson), "Brancusi's Sculpture Ensemble at Tirgu Jiu" (1977-84, Paul Sharits), and "Brancusi Retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum" (1969, Hans Namuth and Paul Falkenberg). . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 10: "Early Abstractions" (1941-57) and "Heaven and Earth Magic" (1958-61), both by Harry Smith. . . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 10: "Early Abstractions" and three other short films by Smith. . . . ¶ Dec. 23 at 8:30: "The Eleventh Year" (1928, Vertov; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ Dec. 26 at 7: "Man with a Movie Camera" (1929, Vertov; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ Dec. 26 at 8:30: "Viaggio a Sodoma" (1988, Tonino De Bernardi).

*A pristine print of "Funny Face" continues its première engagement at the Film Forum 2 through January 3. The giddy color and lustre of this 1957 Fred Astaire–Audrey Hepburn musical are a tribute to Richard Avedon, the movie's "special visual consultant," and Stanley Donen, the director. Leonard Gershe's screenplay is about a fashion photographer (Astaire) hired by an influential, Diana Vreeland-like editor (Kay Thompson) to find a model with a new look. He ends up falling in love with his discovery (Hepburn), a bookstore clerk and philosophy student with the title face. At its best, the movie combines fashion-mag slickness with flippancy.*

*Astaire's Paris shooting sessions with Hepburn are both lush and lively. They wouldn't work so well as satire (he poses her by a train and asks her to think of "Anna Karenina") if they didn't also click as fashion photography. There's a lyrical moment when Hepburn, in a flowing red gown, glides down a staircase and Astaire's camera freezes her in an improbably airy pose. The scene turns the craft of modelling into the height of girlish, dress-up fun.*

*The story isn't as witty as the accoutrements. While in Paris, Hepburn, a devotee of "empathicalism" (a silly offshoot of existentialism), learns that her French-intellectual idol, a bearded guru named Flostre (Michel Auclair), wants her body, not her mind. But the production's over-all high style keeps the fantasy afloat. So do the songs. Most are lifted from the George and Ira Gershwin score for an unrelated 1927 Broadway musical also called "Funny Face" and also starring Astaire. The Gershwin tunes fit perfectly into their new setting. Hepburn's sweet, breathy voice is a perfect mate for Astaire's reedy one, especially on "S'Wonderful." When she sings "You've made my life so glamorous, you can't blame me for feeling amorous," you may find yourself sighing assent.*

**Donnell Library Center,** 20 W. 53rd St. (621-0619)—Dec. 18 at noon: "Gimme Shelter" (1970, Albert and David Maysles and Charlotte Zwerin). . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 2:30: "Love of Life" (1968, François Reichenbach). . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at noon: "Machito: A Latin Jazz Legacy" (1987, Carlos Ortiz), and two short films on jazz.

**Metropolitan Museum of Art,** Fifth Ave. at 81st St. (879-5500)—Dec. 22 at 4 and 6:30: "María Candelaria" (1943, Emilio Fernández; a Mexican film, in Spanish), with Dolores del Rio and Pedro Armendáriz.

**American Museum of the Moving Image,** 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—In either the Riklis Theatre or the Warner Communications Screening Room. Dec. [illegible]9-21 at 2, Dec. 22-23 at 2 and 4, and Dec. 26 at 2: Four different programs in the series "Betty Boop & the Fleischer Cartoon Studio."

**Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., State Office Building,** 163 W. 125th St. (873-5040)—Dec. 19 at [illegible] and 4:15: "The Learning Tree" (1969, Gordon Parks), with Kyle Johnson, Estelle [illegible]ans, and Dick Ward; "Almos' a Man" (1976), with LeVar Burton, Madge Sinclair, and Robert Doquil; and "Langston Hughes: The Dream Keeper" (1988, St. Clair Bourne). . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 6:30: "Glory" (1989, Edward Zwick), with Denzel Washington, Morgan Freeman, and Matthew Broderick; and "Frederick Douglass: An American Life" (1989, William Greaves). . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 1: "Nationtime, Gary" (1972, William Greaves) and "Black Family Unity: History of Africans in America" (1985, Clemson Brown). . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 6: "The River Niger" (1976, Krishna Shah), with James Earl Jones, Lou Gossett, Jr., and Cicely Tyson; "The Final Comedown" (1972, Oscar Williams), with Billy Dee Williams; and "Drop Squad: The Session" (1989, Butch Robinson and David Johnson), with Eric Payne. . . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 1 and 4:05: "Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song" (1973, Melvin Van Peebles); and "Superfly" (1972, Gordon Parks, Jr.), with Ron O'Neal and Carl Lee. . . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 6: "She's Gotta Have It" (1986, Spike Lee), with Tracy Camila Johns, Tommy Redmond Hicks, John Canada Terrell, and Lee; "Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads" (1983, Lee); and "Do the Right Thing" (1989, Lee), with Lee, Danny Aiello, Ossie Davis, Giancarlo Esposito, and Ruby Dee. . . . ¶ Dec. 23 at 2: "Lester Young: Song of the Spirit" (1988, Bruce Frederick), "Art Blakey: The Jazz Messenger" (1984, Dick Fontaine), and "Sarah Vaughan in Concert" (1984, Phil Olsman). . . . ¶ Dec. 23 at 6:30: "Amazing Grace" (1974, Stan Lathan) and "Boarding House Blues" (1948, Josh Binney), both with Jackie (Moms) Mabley. . . . ¶ Dec. 24 at 1 and 3:30: "Glory." . . . ¶ Dec. 24 at 6: "Rude" (1982, Rudy Ray Moore), "Dolemite" (1974, D'Urville Martin), and "Petey Wheatstraw" (1978, Cliff Roquemore), all with Moore. . . . ¶ Dec. 26 at 1 and 4:15: "Def by Temptation" (1990, James Bond III), with Kadeem Hardison and Bill Nunn; and "House Party" (1990, Reginald Hudlin), with Christopher Reid, Robin Harris, and Martin Lawrence. . . . ¶ Dec. 26 at 6:30: "Cleopatra Jones" (1973, Jack Starrett), with Tamara Dobson, Shelley Winters, Antonio Fargas, and Frankie Crocker; and "Coffy" (1973, Jack Hill), with Pam Grier, Booker Bradshaw, and Robert Doquil.

**Whitney Museum,** Madison Ave. at 75th S (570-0537)—"To Take the Glamour Out War: American Film Against the War Vietnam." Dec. 18 at 2: "Viet Flakes" (1965, Carolee Schneemann), "Time of the Locust" (1968, Peter Gessner), and "Song 23: 23rd Psalm Branch, Parts 1 and 2" (1966 and 1978, Stan Brakhage; silent). . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 6:15, Dec. 20 at 2, and Dec. 22 at 1:30: "The Liberal War" (1972, Nick Macdonald), "Only the Beginning" (1971), and "People's War" (1969). . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 2: "Piece Mandala/End War" (1966, Paul Sharits; silent), "The Chelsea Girls" (1966, Andy Warhol), and "A Face of War" (1967, Eugene S. Jones). . . . ¶ Dec. 21 and 23 at 2: "Quixote" (1964-65, Bruce Baillie) and "Last Reflections on a War" (1968, Beryl Fox). . . . ¶ Dec. 26 at 2: "No Game" (1968), "Struggle for Life" (1968), "Boston Draft Resistance Group" (1968), and "The Resistance" (1968, Leonard Henny).

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# IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.

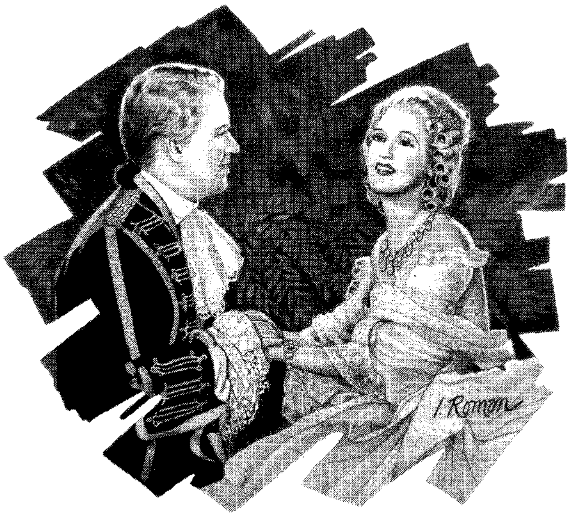
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Terrence Rafferty.)

**L'Atalante** (1934)—*This extraordinary film* was the only full-length feature directed by Jean Vigo, who died (at the age of twenty-nine) just three weeks after its première in 1934. The movie had been drastically cut by the distributor for that first release; it was partially restored in 1940, and it has now been given another major renovation. Vigo's film now looks and sounds better than ever. The screenplay, rewritten by Vigo and Albert Riéra from an original scenario by Jean Guinée, tells the simple story of a pair of newlyweds named Jean (Jean Dasté) and Juliette (Dita Parlo): he's the captain of a river barge called L'Atalante, and she's a girl from one of the villages on his route. As they travel down the river, they become impatient with each other; they are separated, then find each other again, and life resumes its intended course. Vigo treats the story the way a jazz musician treats a popular song, improvising on the melody by plunging into its carefully sequenced chords and predictable rhythms and taking them apart to see what they're made of. He is the most playful and the least rigid of the great film artists: his images seduce us with the promise of a larger, richer world and unbounded freedom to roam in it—the promise, that is, of endless stimulation, inexhaustible sensations. The best thing about this new version is that, for all the restorers' diligence, the film is still messy, imperfect, defiantly incomplete: it's a collection of inspired fragments, the sketchbook of an artist whose imagination was, and will forever remain, gloriously immature. Michel Simon plays a rambunctious old salt called Père Jules, who is the presiding spirit of the movie. Also with Louis Lefèvre and Gilles Margaritis. The stunning cinematography is by Boris Kaufman; Maurice Jaubert wrote the lovely score. In French.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/5/90.) (Lincoln Plaza.)

**Avalon**—In legend, Avalon is an earthly paradise. The writer-director Barry Levinson uses the name as his Rosebud: it's carved into the façade of the castlelike Baltimore apartment house where the five Krichinsky brothers, Jews who immigrated from Eastern Europe before the First World War, make their first American home. In Levinson's view, those early years were a golden age. The film is set mostly during his own childhood, in the late forties, when his parents move to the suburbs, and TV breaks up the clan's social patterns, and the surviving brothers have divided into feuding factions. The scattered fine comic moments don't make up for the wide streak of fuddy-duddyism in the notion that the family used to be the bulwark of the nation's value system. The movie is an elegy to a mythical past, and people emerge from the theatre sniffling. They've been told they're suffering from soul-sickness—the loss of unity, harmony, family music. With Elizabeth Perkins, Aidan Quinn, Kevin Pollak, Armin Mueller-Stahl, and Joan Plowright. —P.K. (10/22/90) (Worldwide Cinemas.)

**Dances with Wolves**—Set during the Civil War, this big Indians-versus-Cavalry epic is like a New Age social-studies lesson. Kevin Costner, who directed and is the star, has an untroubled face and laid-back diction. As Lieutenant Dunbar, a Union officer, he sees that the Sioux have a superior culture and he changes sides. This is a nature-boy movie, a kid's daydream of being an Indian. When Dunbar has become a Sioux named Dances with Wolves, he writes in his journal that he knows for the first time who he really is. Costner has feathers in his hair and feathers in his head. He and his friend Michael Blake (who worked up the material with him in mind and then wrote the novel and the screenplay) are trying to show the last years of the Sioux as an independent nation from the Sioux point of view, and it's probably that sympathy for the Indians that the audience responds to. But Costner is a moviemaking novice: instead of helping us understand the Sioux, he simply makes the Sioux like genial versions of us. This three-hour Western weeper, with its sluggish action and poorly shaped scenes, was made by a bland megalomaniac. (The Indians should have named him Plays with Camera.) Shot in South Dakota; the wide-screen cinematography, by Dean Semler, is spacious and open at times, and there are fine images of buffalo pounding by. With Mary McDonnell, Maury Chaykin, Robert Pastorelli, Graham Greene as Kicking Bird, and Rodney A. Grant as Wind in His Hair.—P.K. (12/17/90) (Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews Tower East, and Loews Paramount.)



*At the Biograph Cinema, Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald in "New Moon"*

**Edward Scissorhands**—A Transylvanian castle rises high in the air out of the end of a bare, flat suburban street. One day, Peg Boggs, the Avon lady (Dianne Wiest, magically daffy), makes a call on the macabre, tumbledown place and discovers an adolescent fairy-tale boy, white-faced Edward (Johnny Depp), with two collections of long sharp shears where his hands should be. (He was created in the castle's kitchen workshop by an aged inventor—Vincent Price, in flashbacks—who died before he could attach the hands he had prepared.) Peg invites the boy to come home with her. At first, this movie, directed by Tim Burton, has a lovely comic spirit, but when the suburbanites think Edward is dangerous and turn against him, the material turns into cheesy, plot-centered melodrama. It has a central flaw: the idea of a boy who cuts when he wants to touch is pre-interpreted: he's the pure creative artist who can't be around people because he can't help hurting them; he's the woeful misunderstood kid. Edward is an emasculated Tim Burton; he's Burton saying "I've always been a sweet guy." (The picture becomes Christmassy and angelic.) With Winona Ryder, Alan Arkin, Kathy Baker, Conchata Ferrell, and Anthony Michael Hall. The score, by Danny Elfman, has an antic sweep to it, and the production design, by Bo Welch, has a fair share of surprises, but the script, by Caroline Thompson, based on Burton's sketches and the story the two of them devised, is undernourished. —P .K. (Ziegfeld.)

**Ghost**—It sounds like a horror movie, but it's a romantic fairy tale. The scariest thing about it is its shamelessness. A young New York bank executive, Sam (Patrick Swayze), is killed, on the street, at a moment in his life when everything seems to be going his way. After his death, Sam sticks around, as a spirit (and Swayze stays onscreen, as a body). He attends his funeral; watches his beautiful girlfriend, Molly (Demi Moore), drift grief-stricken through the spectacular loft they had just moved into; and then devotes himself to protecting her from the people who killed him. Through a reluctant psychic (Whoopi Goldberg), he tries to communicate with Molly; later, an experienced ghost (Vincent Schiavelli) teaches him how to move objects and break stuff. In this movie, death is treated as if it were merely a form of disability, one of those handicaps we've seen people struggle bravely with in TV movies—something for the individual to triumph over with will power, hard work, and love. This creamy-toned fantasy, directed by Jerry Zucker from a screenplay by Bruce Joel Rubin, certainly pushes the audience's emotional buttons. It's a twentysomething hybrid of "It's a Wonderful Life" and some of the goofier, more solemn, episodes of "The Twilight Zone," and there's not a trace of wit or irony in it. Its images of death have a soothing banality, like a greeting-card message from the world beyond. Also with Tony Goldwyn and Rick Aviles.—T[illegible]. (7/30/90) (23rd St. West Triplex. . . . ¶ Embassy; through Dec. 18. . . . ¶ Loews 34th Street Showplace; through Dec. 24. . . . ¶ Embassy; starting Dec. 19, evenings only.)

**GoodFellas**—The director, Martin Scorsese, gives you a lift. He loves the Brooklyn organized-crime milieu, because it's where distortion, hyperbole, and exuberance all commingle. The movie is about being cock of the walk, with banners flying and crowds cheering. Based on Nicholas Pileggi's nonfiction book "Wiseguy," it's a triumphant piece of filmmaking—journalism and sociology presented with the brio of drama. But the three major hoods, played by Ray Liotta, Robert De Niro, and Joe Pesci, don't have a strong enough presence, and the movie lacks the juice and richness that come with major performances. (It's like the Howard Hawks "Scarface" without Scarface.) What you respond to is Scorsese's bravura: the filmmaking process becomes the subject of the movie. Watching it is like getting strung out on pure sensation. Paul Sorvino as Paulie and Lorraine Bracco as Karen both come through, and other performers in minor roles give the movie a frenzied, funny texture. The screenplay is by Pileggi and Scorsese; the cinematography is by Michael Ballhaus; the editing is by Thelma Schoonmaker.—P.K. (9/24/90) (Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Loews 84th Street Sixplex; through Dec. 18. . . . ¶ Movieland 8th Street Triplex, and Sutton; through Dec. 20. . . . ¶ U. A. East; through Dec. 24.)

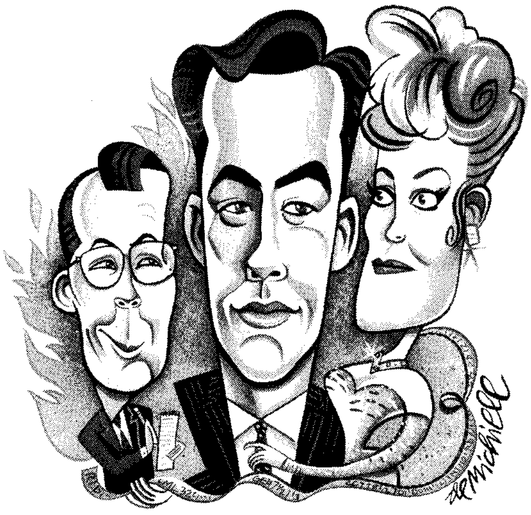
**Henry & June**—Philip Kaufman's wonderful new film shows us the writers Henry Miller (Fred Ward) and Anaïs Nin (Maria de Medeiros) in the first year of their acquaintance, the period of their brief, intense love affair. It's the love story of two people who are making themselves, and each other, up as they go along; Miller and Nin are at once real people and the products of their own imaginations—collaborators in a matched pair of literary myths. And the action unfolds in and around a city that seems both itself and a figment of itself: the Paris of the thirties. Kaufman brings out the bizarre, almost monstrous comedy of their odd literary/sexual love affair; he presents it as a kind of parody image of relationships between men and women. The third major character, Miller's wife, June (Uma Thurman), is the most mysterious presence here. She seems to represent a demonic, annihilating sexual force, but by the end she's almost a tragic figure. The actors are splendid. Kaufman gets miraculously intelligent performances from Ward and de Medeiros, and Thurman—uninhibited yet also weirdly delicate—gives the picture a jolt every time she appears. The movie creates a world, and Kaufman is both affectionate toward and clear-eyed about the people who live in it; he's concerned more with *enjoying* his characters, in all their contradictions, than with explaining them. The material plays as rich, dark erotic farce—a comedy about the duplicity of writers. Also with Richard E. Grant (as Nin's husband) and Kevin Spacey. The screenplay, by Kaufman and his wife, Rose, is based on Nin's diary. Superb cinematography by Philippe Rousselot.—T.R. (10/8/90) (Chelsea Cinemas, and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ Baronet; through Dec. 19. . . . ¶ Metro Cinema; through Dec. 20, evenings only. . . . ¶ Art Greenwich Twin; through Dec. 24.)

**The Krays**—The twins Ronnie and Reggie Kray, a pair of East End thugs who operated several posh night clubs in London in the nineteen-sixties, are underworld legends for the English. Most Americans don't know much about them; and after two hours of watching this picture we still don't. The director, Peter Medak, and the screenwriter, Philip Ridley, take an arty, elliptical approach to what should be superbly tawdry gangster-movie material. The filmmakers walk up to us with big, mean-looking metaphors in their hands and open fire. The Krays (played by Gary and Martin Kemp, who are brothers but not twins) wander through the movie looking sinister and rather dazed, as if they had forgotten who they were supposed to be. And who can blame them? They spend most of their time gazing into mirrors and telling each other their dreams: they're so burdened with meaning they seem unable to *do* anything. The bizarre, dreamlike tone might have worked—sort of—if the ideas in the script weren't so dopey. The picture advances, for instance, the remarkable theory that the Krays' sociopathic natures were created by the Blitz and an excess of love from their mother. That's the sort of thing Medak and Ridley give us in lieu of information, action, narrative; it won't do. Also with Billie Whitelaw as the twins' mother, Violet Kray.—T.R. (Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ Waverly; through Dec. 20. . . . ¶ Chelsea Cinemas; through Dec. 22.)

**Mr. & Mrs. Bridge**—An adaptation, by the Merchant Ivory team (the director James Ivory, the producer Ismail Merchant, and the writer Ruth Prawer Jhabvala), of Evan S. Connell's novels about the painfully respectable Bridge family of Kansas City. Walter and India Bridge (Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward) are pure exemplars of the middle: they're middle-aged and middle-class; they live in a medium-sized city in virtually the dead center of the United States; and they are neither truly happy nor consciously unhappy. They're monsters of moderation. At the beginning of the film, Ivory seems eerily in tune with the novels' distinctive sensibility: the domestic vignettes are sharply dramatized and succeed each other with an even, confident rhythm; the nuances of behavior, language, and décor register and then resonate satisfyingly; the tone is exactly right, cool but not condescending. The picture gets by, initially, on its strange mood of chilling coziness, and when we tire of that—and we do, because it doesn't change or develop—the actors keep us engaged a while longer. Newman doesn't try to soften the character, or to distance himself from it with exaggerated effects, and his scrupulousness pays off. The character seems not more likable but more human than it does in the novels; by very simple means, Newman enables us to understand Mr. Bridge's insensitivity and emotional ineptitude. And Woodward, too, gives a delicate, subtle performance: she embodies a foolish woman vividly and unpatronizingly. But the screenplay retains the static quality of the books' construction, so at a certain point the scenes begin to feel arbitrary. And Ivory's perspective on the material seems to become clouded by a storm of minutiae—a surfeit of period detail. (The action takes place in the late thirties and early forties.) In the end, the Bridges aren't large enough either to move us or to terrify us: they're the Ambersons without the magnificence. Also with Blythe Danner, Kyra Sedgwick, Robert Sean Leonard, Margaret Welsh, and Simon Callow.—T.R. (12/3/90) (Cinema II. . . . ¶ Cinema 3rd Avenue. Evenings only.)

**Postcards from the Edge**—This tale of a sorrowful, wisecracking starlet (Meryl Streep) whose brassy, boozing former-star mother (Shirley MacLaine) started her on sleeping pills when she was nine is camp without the zest of camp. It's camp played borderline straight—a druggy-Cinderella movie about an unformed girl who has to go past despair to find herself. The director, Mike Nichols, is a parodist who feigns sincerity, and his tone keeps slipping around. What's clear is that we're meant to be enthralled by the daughter's radiant face, her refinement, her honesty. Nichols keeps the camera on Streep as if to prove that he can make her a popular big star—a new Crawford or Bette Davis. (She remains distant, emotionally atonal.) The tacky, bright-colored film—a near-plotless version of a woman's picture—is weightless, yet it's watchable. Its jadedness appeals to the narcissism of show-biz insiders and to the would-be insider in the rest of us. (Nichols is acclaimed for being hip to the Zeitgeist.)—P.K. (10/22/90) (Worldwide Cinemas.)

**Reversal of Fortune**—An entertainingly trashy sick-joke docudrama about how Claus von Bülow's conviction for trying to kill his superrich wife was overturned on appeal through the brainpower of the Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz and his team of students and former students. Jeremy Irons' von Bülow is a pop conception of a decadent aristocrat, and the crowd-pleasing satirical subtext is that the heirs and heiresses of great fortunes are useless, bored, unloving, and unloved. The fun here is that Irons' performance is a masterly conceit. His von Bülow is a depraved cuckoo; he simply can't resist playing ghoulish comedian and making Dershowitz (Ron Silver) his stooge. The script, by Nicholas Kazan, is skillfully constructed, but it's based on Dershowitz's book about the case, and he's the protagonist—the crusading lawyer searching for evidence of innocence. Silver's Dershowitz seems to be overdosing on proud sentimental Jewishness. (That this is a positive stereotype makes it no less a stereotype.) The direction, by Barbet Schroeder, is assured but often impersonal and emptily energetic. With Glenn Close (very effective as Sunny von Bülow, the comatose narrator), Christine Baranski as Andrea Reynolds. Music by Mark Isham.—P.K. (11/19/90) (Eastside Cinema, and 8th St. Playhouse. . . . ¶ Loews 19th Street East 6, and 68th Street Playhouse; through Dec. 18. . . . ¶ Loews 84th Street Sixplex; through Dec. 20.)



*Bruce Willis, Tom Hanks, and Melanie Griffith in "The Bonfire of the Vanities"*

**The Sheltering Sky**—Published in 1949, Paul Bowles' semi-autobiographical account of his marriage fascinated readers by its Olympian closeted tone. Under the novel's vaporousness is a pop theme: what happens to a modern, dissatisfied woman—a New York artist-intellectual—if she's in the Sahara, her husband dies, and she's enslaved in a harem? But this is not simply a male writer's version of a woman's harem-whore fantasy: the wife, Kit, seems to be fulfilling the nature and desires that the husband, Port, cannot fulfill for himself. Bernardo Bertolucci's attenuated film version filters out the pop element that gives the book its bit of kicky horror. The movie is about Kit (Debra Winger) giving over to another way of seeing; it's about the shift in her psyche as she becomes a contented love slave and moves away from the verbal, from definitions and categories and neuroses. Bertolucci appears to have lost interest in pace and excitement and verve; he goes deep into monotony. (The whole thing has the impressively decadent look of an Armani ad.) With John Malkovich as Port (who's full of smug self-hatred), Campbell Scott as Tunner, Jill Bennett, Timothy Spall, and Bowles (at seventy-nine) as some sort of presiding expatriate sage. The script is by Mark Peploe and Bertolucci; the cinematography is by Vittorio Storaro; the music is by Ryuichi Sakamoto.—P.K. (12/17/90) (57th St. Playhouse. . . . ¶ Murray Hill Cinemas; starting Dec. 21.)

**To Sleep with Anger**—A domestic comedy with an unusually dense texture. It's shot straightforwardly, in a style that appears realistic almost to the point of banality, and yet right from the start there's something unsettling about its plainness: Charles Burnett, who wrote and directed, keeps hinting that things are not necessarily what they seem. Gideon (Paul Butler) and Suzie (Mary Alice) are a middle-aged black couple who live in Los Angeles; their roots, however, are in the rural South, and they've retained quite a few of the customs, values, and superstitions of the culture they were brought up in. The story gets going when a friend of theirs from back home appears on their doorstep; they invite him to stay with them awhile, and he does. This unexpected guest, Harry (Danny Glover), turns out to be a gifted confidence man, with a sharp eye for human weakness; he's a grinning, honey-tongued demon. He uses his backcountry wisdom with sinister, obscure intent, for purposes that Burnett, cunningly, allows to remain ambiguous. The presence of Harry gives the realistic surface of the movie a vibrant strangeness; he seems to transform everything that happens in these clean, comfortable living rooms and kitchens into dark rituals performed in the woods in the dead of night. The picture has a risky, complex tone: it's a comedy, because the family's threatened world is set right in the end, but there are moments along the way when the intimations of unseen controlling forces—both in Glover's elegantly suggestive performance and in the eerie, calm precision of Burnett's direction—give us the creeps.—T.R. (11/5/90) (Angelika Film Center.)

**Tune in Tomorrow . . .**—The romantic, surreal farce material is William Boyd's adaptation of Mario Vargas Llosa's "Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter." The director, Jon Amiel, seems to like it so much that he gets carried away just watching the actors. He doesn't set up the jokes, and the movie is a mess, but it's a whimsical, pleasant mess: luckily, we like to watch these people, too. At the center, Peter Falk is the carelessly demented radio-serial writer who interferes in people's lives for the sake of his soapy art. The idea seems to be that the scriptwriter puts real life into soap opera and then the real people imitate soap opera—or something like that. Falk brings a delirium to his role—he fuses high and low comedy. There are amusing bits with radio actors whose faces and voices don't mesh; there are also some neat parodies of the radio listeners' fantasies. The cast includes Keanu Reeves with slicked-down hair and Barbara Hershey chewing gum (as hot-blooded lovers), and Peter Gallagher, Elizabeth McGovern, John Larroquette, Richard B. Shull, Henry Gibson, Dan Hedaya, Buck Henry, Hope Lange, and Irving Metzman. The setting (it's Lima, Peru, in the novel) is New Orleans in 1951, and the happy music is provided by Wynton Marsalis and his band—they appear onscreen. So does Shirley Horn.—P.K. (Cinema 3. . . . ¶ Angelika Film Center; through Dec. 18.)

**Vincent & Theo**—The director, Robert Altman, and the screenwriter, Julian Mitchell, give us an interpretation of the bond that helps to keep Vincent alive while it tears Theo apart. Vincent is obsessive about his painting; Theo is obsessive about Vincent and about his own inability to sell Vincent's work and help him—he can give him only a pittance. This double Passion-play movie is very different from the other Altman movies (even allowing for how different they are from each other). The theme—the bitter entanglement of art and commerce—is Altman's lifelong theme, and, staying with it strictly in terms of the van Gogh brothers, he's able to release his own feelings about how an artist's frustrations lead him to acts of self-destructive fury—cutting off his ear to spite his face. It's a movie about two sensualists made by a sensualist, who understands that their bond of love of art is also a bond of shared rage at the world of commerce. This daring film works on its own relentless, celebratory terms. With Tim Roth, whose acting is a form of kinetic discharge, as Vincent and Paul Rhys as Theo. The cinematography is by Jean Lepine, the production design is by Stephen Altman, the score is by Gabriel Yared; all three rise to the occasion.—P.K. (11/19/90) (Loews Fine Arts; through Dec. 24. . . . ¶ Angelika Film Center; starting Dec. 25.)

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THE NEW YORKER

# THE TALK OF THE TOWN

## *Notes and Comment*

WE'VE received a letter from a man who loves department stores:

The windows at Lord & Taylor are very good this year, but they seem to be heading out of town. The theme is "A Train Trip up the Hudson," and the stops are: the old Grand Central, Sunnyside (the Washington Irving House), Olana (the house of the Hudson River School painter Frederick Church, near the city of Hudson), and the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga.

Now, before I tell you any more about these windows, I'm going to tell you about department stores. I love them, and I'm afraid that right now they are terribly, terribly *visible*. Things shouldn't be completely understandable, you know. This is especially true if you are selling something. A store says "This year Milady will ask for . . . " or, conversely, "Bang Smash OOMPH, forget Milady, we're talking ENERGY! YOUTH!" and at that point—the exact point where you, the potential buyer, feel a little pulse of interest, a little urge to purchase either a solid, well-made thing or a bit of frippery—you and the Big Store (a favorite term of mine) dance together in the mystery of our culture.

In my opinion, you need four things in order to have New York City—I mean, apart from a piece of real estate on which *x* million people happen to be receiving goods and services. You need the big financial houses, you need Broadway, you need the newspapers, and you need the department stores. I don't understand the big financial houses anymore—that will have to be someone else's problem—and the problem of Broadway is too big to tackle right now, but I do understand newspapers and department stores.

Here's one thing. Newspapers depend on advertising from the department stores, and it's the closest thing to perfection, in a worldly arrangement, that one can imagine. Department stores need to advertise every day; they advertise goods that people will always need; they do their best to create advertisements that are pleasing to the eye, and even to the mind. (There are days when the only bit of poetic feeling in the newspaper—the only bit of whimsy or lightheartedness—will be in a department-store advertisement.) Moreover, it is rare that the interests of these Big Stores are in serious conflict with the goals of "objective" reporting. You do have to accept the idea of commerce, but you don't have to accept a Big Position on anything in order not to be offended by department-store advertising.

Here is a list of newspapers that have shut up shop since the end of the Second World War: the *Sun*, the *World-Telegram & Sun*, the *Herald Tribune*, the *Journal-American*, the *World Journal Tribune*, the *Daily Mirror*. To put it another way, here is a list of the newspapers that have not shut up shop since the end of the Second World War: the *News*, the *Post*, the *Times*. And now, of course, the future of the *News* is in doubt, and we would be worried about the *Post* if it weren't getting the ads that would otherwise be going to the *News*. Here is a list of Big Stores that have gone out of business in the same period: Best & Company, Oppenheim Collins, Franklin Simon, Gimbels, Ohrbach's, Russeks, Arnold Constable, Bonwit Teller, De Pinna, S. Klein, Saks 34th Street. Looking over that list, I like the way I slipped Gimbels in there. It's like losing Pennsylvania Station to lose Gimbels. And I want to mention Rogers Peet, too. And I have forgotten B. Altman. Already forgotten, the handsomest store in New York: one full city block of good architecture; wide aisles, high ceilings.

Here is an article that appeared in *Clothes* in 1970, on the occasion of the closing of Best & Company:

> What did it have to offer except the Lilliputian Bazaar and a great place for children's haircuts? Outside of the children's area, Best's was strictly an establishment store—wood paneled, conservative, and dull.

This writer was sure that "with it" stores (his phrase) were the ordained executioners of Best & Company. We are a country of ordained executioners—a country that believes itself thoroughly justified in undoing the latest mistake. Alas, it is such difficult work to create a democratic aesthetic that anything that *has pleased* should be

NEW YORK CITY
ICE SKATING

precious to us. Even the *Journal-American;* even Oppenheim Collins. Oppenheim Collins was subtly different from Franklin Simon, with which it merged before going out of business. There is a loss in each of those disappearances.

So when I went to look at the windows at Lord & Taylor this year I went with two friends. I wanted it to be a bit of a celebration, you see. We walked east on Fortieth Street. I went that way in order to show them the American Radiator Building. For years, it had been a favorite thing of mine: a corporation become specific in my mind over time because of the shape and color of its building. Closed up shop. "They can't stay in their own building," one of my friends said.

I come from a New York family that has almost closed up shop: I am the last of it. My first ancestor in this city sold buttons on Maiden Lane. They used to say "in" Maiden Lane. Button Munn, they called this fellow, who had marched cattle to Washington's Army and been hoodwinked by the man he was working for in this cattle arrangement (he was a boy), and who then decided, I think, never to be hoodwinked again. That's who we are in this city: a lot of people who have decided never to be hoodwinked again. He bought land warrants from the soldiers who were discharged after the War of 1812. The government had paid them in land. The soldiers didn't know what to do with it; Munn did. He sold that land during a boom and bought land in town. In the eighteen-twenties, he built a big brick Federal-style house at Broadway and Grand Street. He lived in it for about thirty years; then the family leased the site to Lord & Taylor for its third store—"a five-story palace of white marble," according to L. & T. itself. For years, I could look out at the site of the white marble palace. It was a Park Fast. I was happily living in a hippie coöperative building on Grand Street.

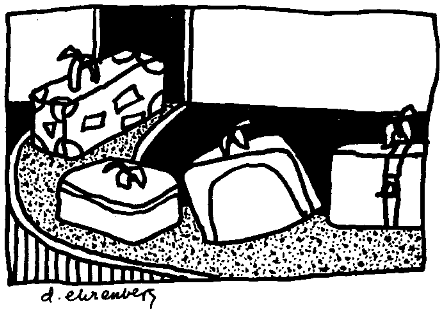
Here's really why I love department stores. It's because of my grandmother. My grandmother was a beautiful woman, and she was widowed when she was still quite young. For a while after my grandfather died, she had money to spend, and then she didn't. When life became difficult for her, she thought about what she knew how to do, and what she knew about was clothes—especially how to shop for clothes. So she went to see Jack Strauss, of Macy's, who was a friend, and he gave her a job as a fur stylist, and then she went to work for Frederick Loeser & Company, in Brooklyn, as the head of its comparison-shopping department. There she shopped for clothes for a living.

This is a wonderful country. There are people here who are working on cold fusion, and other people who understand the words of Derrida. But every once in a while, almost as part of our way of life, a very cold wind blows across us, and who we are *apart from* our grandest achievement is revealed. My grandmother knew clothes, *really* knew clothes, and she built a success on that. Derrida and cold fusion have yet to enter the culture. We still are, at our best, a nation of newspapers and department stores. How many more can we lose?

Every once in a while, some evidence of having learned to coöperate—to serve others—is required, I guess. "You have had *x* number of years to experiment. Now, how much of what you have done is really useful to other people?" *That* question gets asked. We have been—are—a nation of experimenters, and now the experiments are going to be revealed as having been successful or not. Meanwhile, the modest, solid previous culture—the culture of newspapers and department stores—seems to be on its way out.

I can't help recording the fact that my grandmother used department stores as a *template* of culture. She knew each one down to the bone. Once, as a child, my father asked her if all the Santas on the street were "Santa's helpers," as he had been told. "Nonsense," my grandmother said. "They're all fakes. The real one is at Lord & Taylor."

The windows at Lord & Taylor really *are* lovely this year. In the Olana window, there are men catching sparkling fish through a small hole in the ice. One man is constantly trying to see if he has a fish on his line. One man is constantly admiring what he has caught. One young girl twirls and twirls on one ice skate. She looks as if she'll be doing it until the end of time. She's wearing a dusty-rose wool coat trimmed in a light-colored fur. One man is roasting a fish over a very orange fire.



To my list of closed-up department stores I would like to add Frederick Loeser & Company and Namm's, both of Fulton Street, Brooklyn. Merry Christmas.

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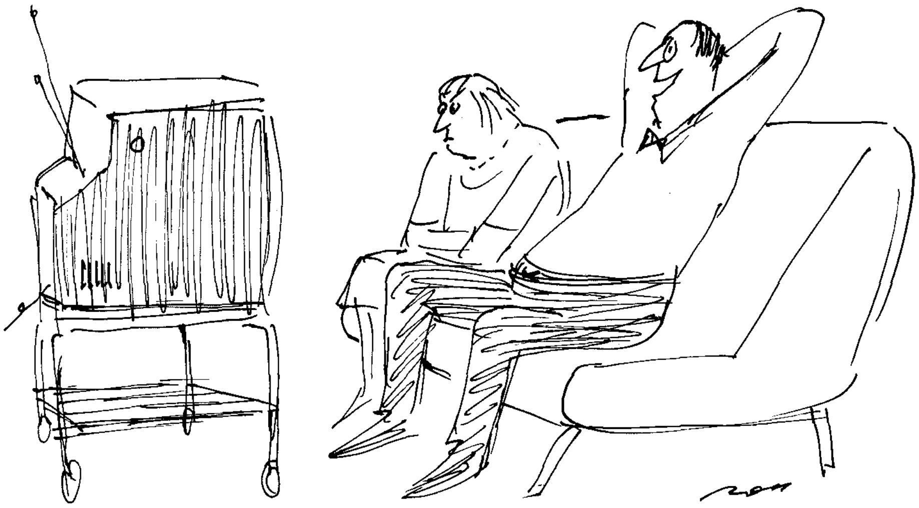
## *Rounds*

NO one knows exactly when the first carrousel was built in the United States. We do know when the first one was banned: in 1784, by action of the New York City Common Council. It was probably dangerous, and, by our standards, it was surely drab. Early carrousels did not have seat belts, poles conveniently placed for holding on to, or mechanisms to give one the sensation of riding a jumper. They did not have elaborate band organs or calliopes. They did not have cupids, hippocampi, pennants, or strings of electric lights. They did not offer a choice between mounts and wheelchair-accessible chariots. Early American carrousels did not even have children on them. They were ridden by adults seeking a taste of controlled adventure in a time when uncontrolled adventure could still gobble you up for breakfast.

The carrousel was developed in Europe during the seventeenth century by noblemen. They rigged up a device that permitted several men to sit on a wheel turned by a single workhorse and practice throwing their lances through a brass ring nailed to a post; the invention came about because in practicing their aim from horseback the noblemen had worn out too many tournament-quality steeds. The Golden Age of the carrousel took place in America roughly between a great wave of European immigration around 1880, which brought the master carvers of the horses, and the dregs of the stock-market crash, around 1930, which reversed the fortunes of the amusement parks, where most of the carrousels were. Today, of some five thousand hand-carved wooden carrousels built in the United States during that period fewer than two hundred are known to have survived.

Will Morton VIII, of Lakewood, Colorado, used to make his living as an artist—sculpture, big stuff. "But you have to be a businessman, a self-promoter, with big sculpture," he told us recently. "When I got involved in the carrousel business—carving and restoring—it seemed to sell itself. People come back to me." He was seated in a small, cluttered office in the old zebra house at Brooklyn's Prospect Park Zoo, which is currently closed to the public for major renovation. Almost every day for the past fifteen months, Mr. Morton, along with Marlene Morton—a journalist, and his wife of thirty-one years—has joined a handful of New Yorkers either in the zebra house or in the zoo's carrousel gazebo, where they have all been at work on a complete restoration of the Prospect Park carrousel, the first capital project of a citizens' fund-raising group called the Prospect Park Alliance. Most of the work was completed by mid-October, including the replacement of four thousand pieces of slate in the gazebo roof and three hundred and twelve panes of stained glass in the gazebo clerestory, but a few of the mounts were not ready, and the team of restorers has been working feverishly to finish them by Christmas. The day we visited the zebra house, Mrs. Morton was just beginning to apply paint to the body of the last horse in need of attention.

What is now the Prospect Park carrousel was constructed in 1912, Mr. Morton told us, and had fifty-six mounts, most of which were probably equine. The carrousel was the work of the master carver Charles Carmel (1865-1932), who is often linked to "the Coney Island style" of carrousel carving—a style that features horses caught at moments of intense exertion. Their mouths are stretched open, as if from the force of the bit; their manes are extravagantly whipped, as if by the onrushing wind. In the course of the restoration, Mr. Morton decided to substitute three menagerie figures—a lion, a deer, and a giraffe—for three Carmel originals that had been lost.



*"You know, there's more to Madonna than meets the eye."*

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The exotics, which were made in the early nineteen-hundreds, are carved in "the Philadelphia style." "It's more classic and conservative than the Coney Island style," Mr. Morton said. "The Coney Island style is more flamboyant, aggressive, theatrical. The Philadelphia lion did not have eyes. Those big golden eyes in him now are new lion eyes we got from a taxidermist. The deer, on the other hand, has standard carrousel-horse eyes, and they're the eyes that were in him."

We asked Mr. Morton if he thought that the carrousel carvers had conceived their figures from life.

"I didn't grow up on a ranch, and I don't know that much about horses," he said. "But I'm an artist—I create and design things, and I sense what the carvers intended. Carmel was working right after the turn of the century, and by then there seem to have been head and body positions that all the carrousel carvers generally used. On this carrousel, for example, there are two main sizes of horse and three positions of the head—looking downward, pointed straight out, and looking up. These are variously combined with two basic positions of the legs—jumpers and standards. Where these positions came from isn't clear. My guess is that they were designed to accommodate a visual reality, to make the horses look graceful, and to satisfy a need for structural or engineering integrity—to make the horses strong enough to hold people. As for the two sides of the horse—the highly worked and decorated outside and the plainer inside—remember that the carrousel platform rotates counterclockwise. So the right sides of all the horses are carved in greater detail, with the heads turned to the right and the manes blown over there. We call it 'the romance side.' "

Did Carmel make intentional references—in his elaborate saddles, for instance—to the origins of the carrousel in European tournaments, we asked.

"No," Mr. Morton said. "He was thinking of his own, Victorian time, not Charlemagne's. He'd have had in mind the contemporary design around him. Charlie Carmel was a Russian Jew who came to the United States in the eighteen-eighties, and he brought the cultural background that he had. He was probably excited by being in America, this wonderful, growing land. He probably had pangs of patriotism and used special symbols and motifs to express them. He met woodcarvers who were immigrants from Germany and Austria, and they probably enjoyed seeing what the other fellow was doing."

What about the horses' tails? Some carrousel horses have carved tails, but Carmel's used the real article—long, glossy, and frisky in the breeze.

"We bought these tails in California," Mr. Morton said. "They were very nicely groomed and trimmed."

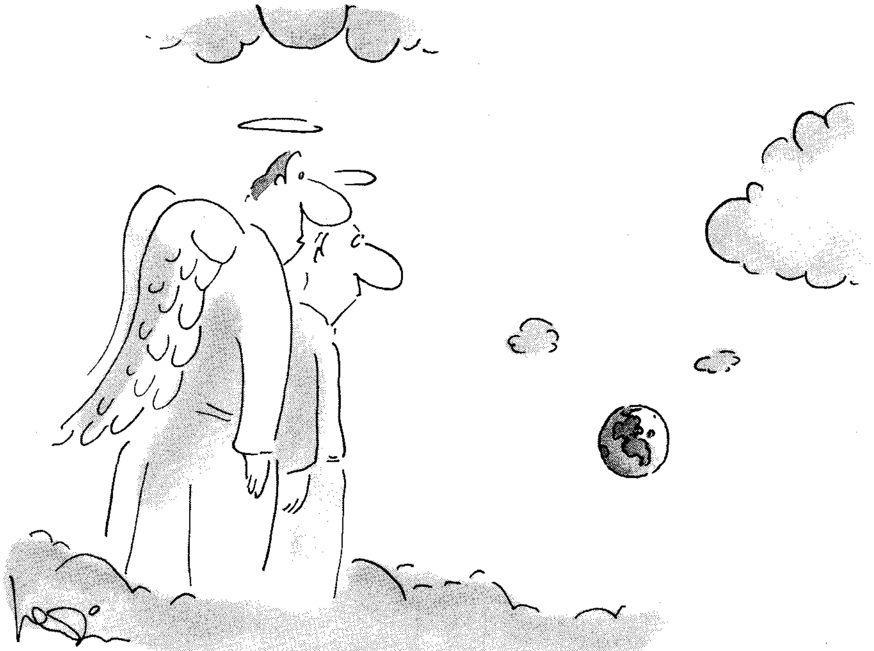
"What became of the California horses?" we asked.

Mrs. Morton had almost finished the creamy underbelly of the last carrousel horse, shading it with a peach tone that made the skin come vibrantly alive. Mr. Morton circled the figure and nodded in appreciation. "Expired," he said.

## *Dental Work*

WE'RE not going to lie to you. This is going to hurt some. It would be completely unrealistic for anyone who reads this dispatch from the 66th Annual Greater New York Dental Meeting, which just ran for six days at the Javits Convention Center, to expect to absorb the entire experience with absolutely no discomfort. Not only would it be unrealistic but it would indicate a lack of empathy. The exhibitors at the 66th A.G.N.Y.D.M. had to spend day after day on their feet, batting their eyes at and schmoozing with potential customers. The dental professionals who attended had to put up with friendly badgering from exhibitors who expected them to tolerate aggressive sales pitches even as they were being confronted with super-enlarged color photographs of unfortunate-looking gum tissue. Only intermittently were the exhibitors and the dental professionals permitted the luxury of sneaking off to seminars like "Controversies and Myths in Temporomandibular Disorders" or, if they got really lucky, to clinics like "The Use of the Subepithelial Connective Tissue Graft for the Coverage of Denuded Root Surfaces." Otherwise, it was *work*, *work*, *work*, which is why it is hardly reasonable of you, the probably oral-hygienically uncomplicated reader, to expect to glide through fourteen hundred or so words of intrepidly gathered reportage as if the experience were one seamless nitrous-oxide-fuelled Caribbean holiday.

This next paragraph, actually, is going to be relatively painless. Just a little prep work. Turn your head this way. Not that far. O.K., *there*. See those three guys in the concourse of the Javits Center, near the registration desk? Each of those three still youthful D.D.S.s happens to be a 1973 graduate of the distinguished New York University College of Dentistry, and each happens to be a multidimensional person. The slightly bald one with the dark beard is Don Simkin (who lives upstate, in Youngsville, and practices in Livingston Manor), and the others are John Garnett (who lives in Goshen and practices in Monticello) and Scott Sherrin (who lives in Manhattan and practices in Astoria). Dr. Simkin does volunteer consulting with the United States Luge Association and, by virtue of his selfless willingness to provide any eligible luger with a special mouthpiece, which will theoretically enable said luger to slide down an icy mountain on his fanny faster than he would without the mouthpiece, regards himself as the luge team's unofficial dentist. "It's hard to describe how it works," Dr. Simkin says. "It's one of those situations where if you feel you heal."



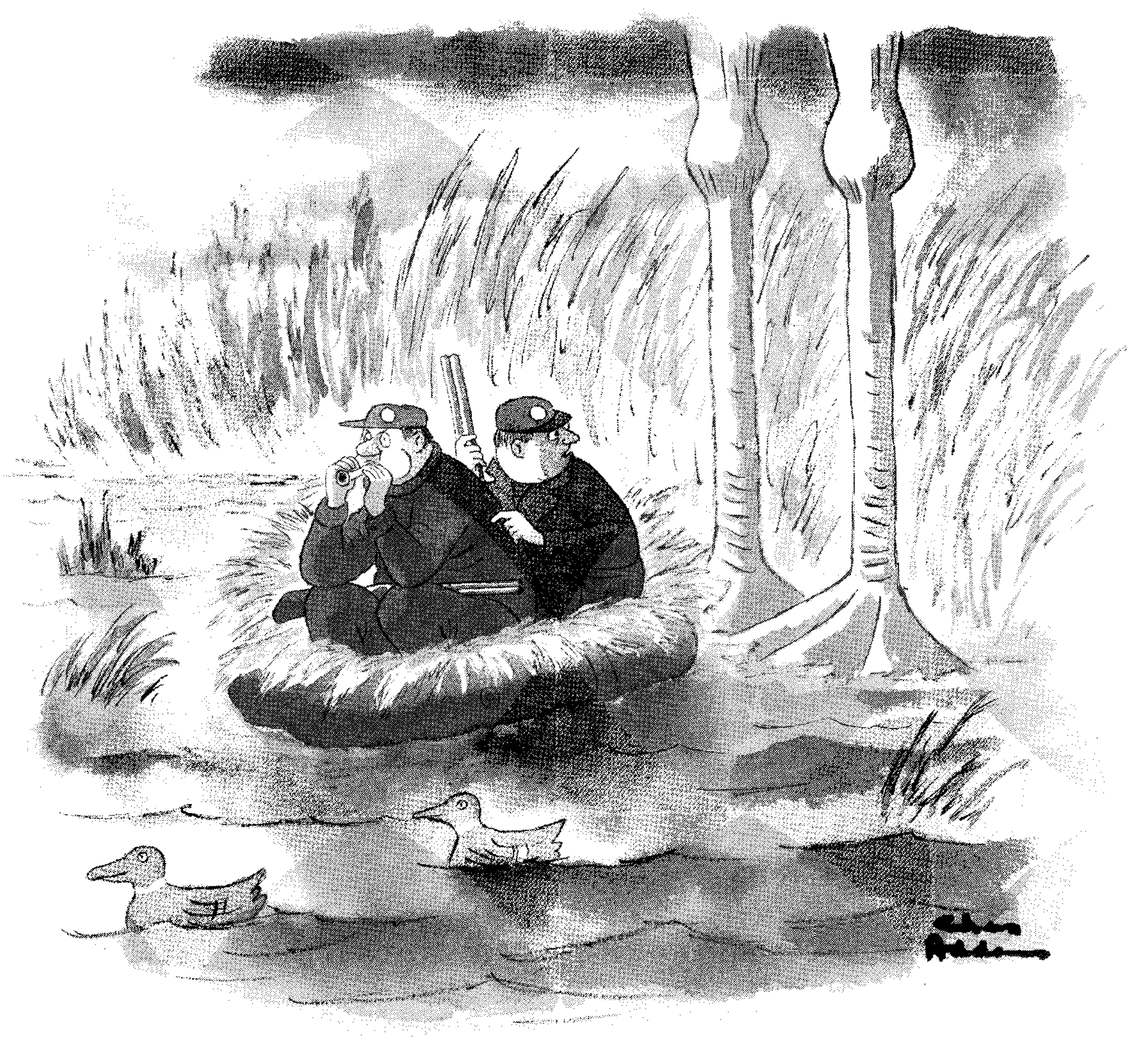
"*As far as I'm concerned, we didn't get out a moment too soon.*"

Dr. Sherrin, in the pursuit of *his* multidimensionality, spends at least part of every Friday—his day off—at Maxilla & Mandible, the Upper West Side emporium where people who enjoy the idea of being surrounded by animal skeletons go to shop. He has about three hundred specimens in his collection, most of them in his loft, in Tribeca, but a few in his office, including a set of sharks' teeth, sectioned skulls of a fox, a beaver, a rabbit, and a jaguar, and molars from an elephant and a hippopotamus.

Meanwhile, Dr. Garnett has been devoting virtually all *his* spare time to a painstaking analysis of his golf swing, which he has been conducting in a friend's attic—an attic that, having been retrofitted with a large piece of nylon netting and some state-of-the-art video equipment, is now a facility poised at the cutting edge of golf-pathology research.

Now, it's very important that you lie perfectly still and try not to swallow during this next passage, because it involves evulsed teeth. When it's all done, you can rinse and look in the mirror. We're going to ask you to join Drs. Simkin, Sherrin, and Garnett in the vicinity of the three-by-four-foot photograph of the interior of a mouth that's been someplace its owner wishes it hadn't. We're talking about the photograph next to the sign that says, in red block letters, "Doctor, Will You Be a Hero to This Patient?" This valuable parcel of Javits Center real estate—it's the site of the Emergency Tooth Preserving System booth—has been rented by Dr. Paul Krasner, whom Dr. Simkin met a couple of summers ago at an Academy for Sports Dentistry gathering in Colorado. "This guy Krasner is an endodontist, so he specializes in root canal," Dr. Simkin explains. "This product is for when someone walks into your office with an evulsed tooth. You know, knocked out. Normally, you have about fifteen minutes before the periodontal fibres and the tooth itself dry out—before it's too late to restore that tooth to the mouth. So this guy has come up with an enzyme that preserves the tooth for up to twelve hours. In my career I've had three walk-ins with evulsed teeth. So I bought one of these enzyme kits from this guy. How many evulsed teeth have I had since I bought it? Not a single one."

Sorry. Our hand slipped and we went a little deeper in that last passage than we'd originally planned. You can lie back with your eyes closed for a while, and we'll take a leisurely stroll along the aisles. It is true that Dr. Simkin has said, "I'm basically a sucker for any of this stuff," but that does not mean he plans to visit all five hundred and thirty-seven of the exhibitors' booths. He's going to skip the adults-only dental-video venders, for instance, even though doing so means not catching the latest "Futuristic Dentistry" action tapes, which feature personalities like the incredibly versatile Dr. Werner H. Mormann, who's good for two hours and seven minutes of non-stop natural-looking molar-inlay fabrication in his award-deserving new blockbuster, "Chairside Computer-Aided Direct Ceramic Restorations." Time constraints will also prevent Dr. Simkin from lingering at the Columbia Dentoform Corporation booth, where they're offering a nice price on a set of one-and-a-half-times-normal-size flossing-brushing-demonstration choppers, with the adjustable-hinge articulator for locking the jaws in an open position. Tell you what—you just continue to relax while Dr. Simkin steps across the aisle to the Seabury & Smith insurance company's booth to get answers to some nagging questions about his malpractice coverage. And while he's doing that we'll entertain ourself by loitering at the Thieme Medical Publishers' table and leafing through George Laskaris's "Color Atlas of Oral Diseases"— *God, no! Don't open your eyes yet!*



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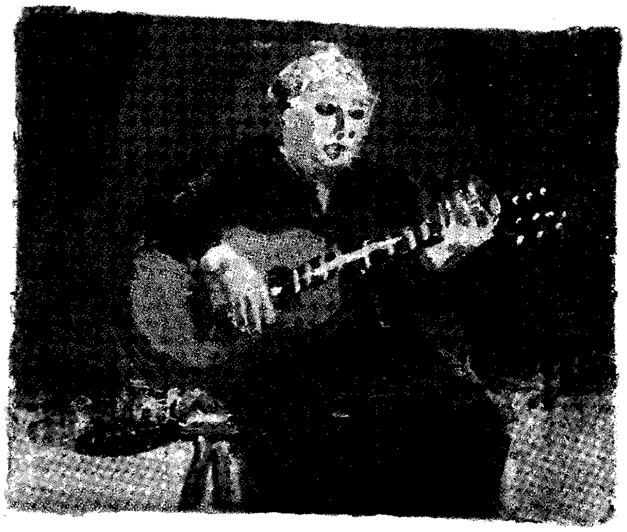
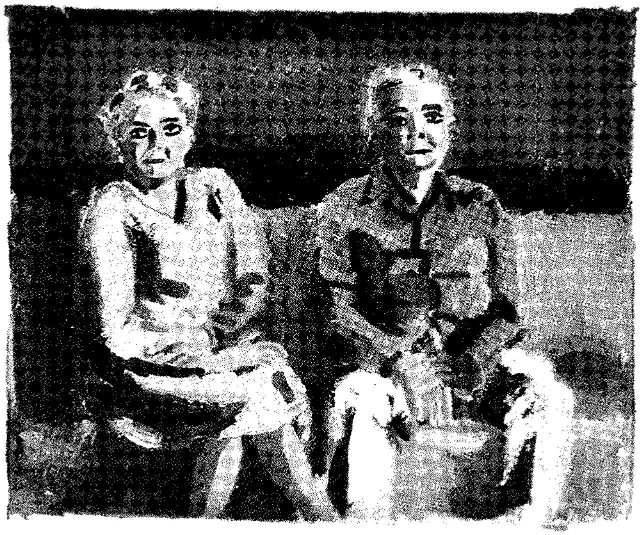
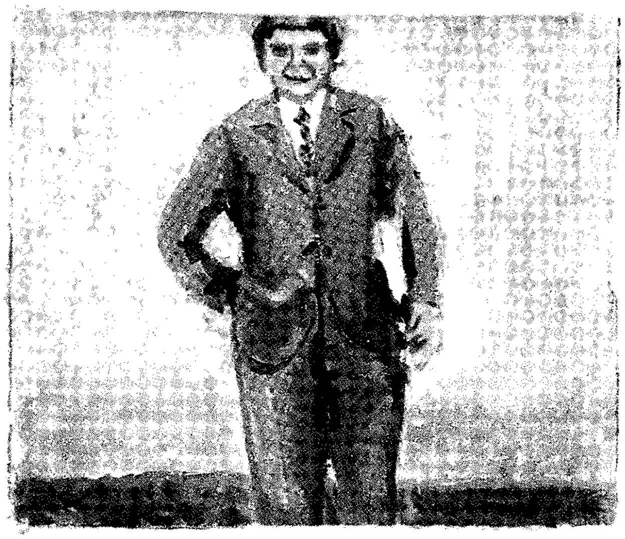
You look as if you could use some EpiSmile. You need to come with us right now for a consultation with Lucia Smigel, who wants to give you some important information about "smile technology." Mrs. Smigel has a revolutionary new toothbrush, the EpiDent Ultra, which she wants you to try with EpiSmile, the safe and effective tooth whitener and cleanser that was invented by her husband and contains CalProx, which "removes extrinsic stains by dissolving the protein pellicle on the teeth, to which stains and plaque adhere." To get you in the mood for some EpiSmile therapy, Lucia Smigel usually says, "You know how, around this time of the afternoon, your teeth feel like they're wearing sweaters?"

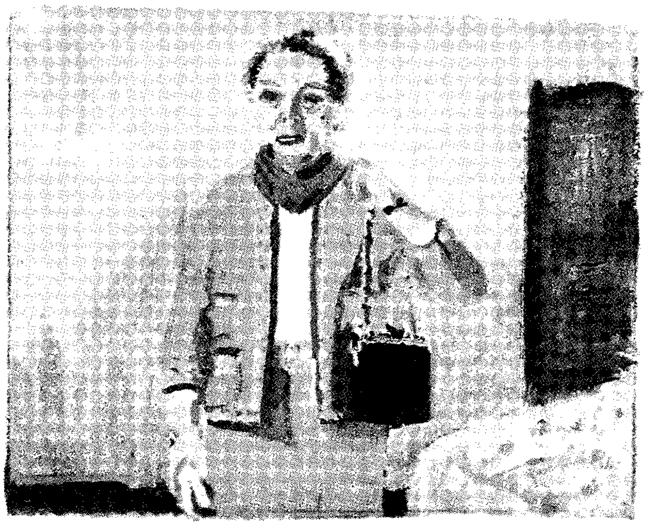
While you're trying to figure out whether the answer to that question is yes or no, Dr. Simkin is going to bump into another of his fellow N.Y.U. dental alumni, Jan Stahl, who quit looking closely at mouths eight years ago, when he gave up his practice and became an entrepreneur. He drives a 1986 Pontiac Sunbird convertible—an absolute cream puff, which had three hundred miles on the odometer when he practically stole it at an estate auction a few summers back—with vanity license tags that say "XDENTIST." His company is called APO Health, and from now on, if you're actually serious about making that crazy dream of never again having to face the music inside a dentist's office come true, if you're really not kidding when you fantasize about do-it-yourself dentistry, all you have to do is call Jan Stahl's toll-free number, and he'll gladly supply you directly with gauze, face masks, endodontic files, reamers—the works. And don't forget the examining gloves. He sells them powdered or powderless, and they come in several designer shades. Now here's that toll-free number: 1-800-36LATEX.

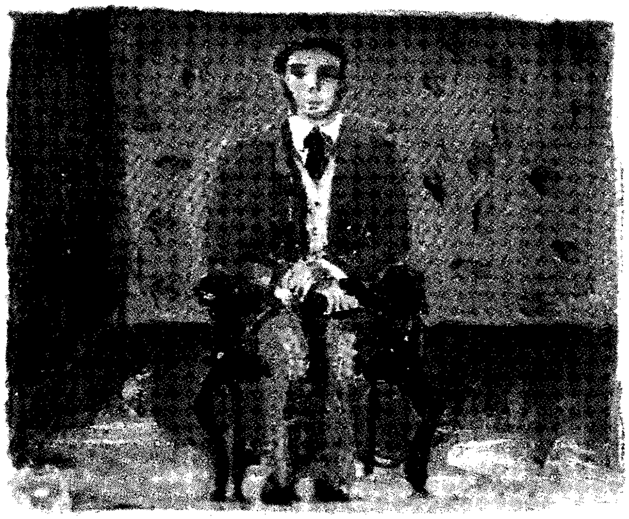
# Sweet Memories

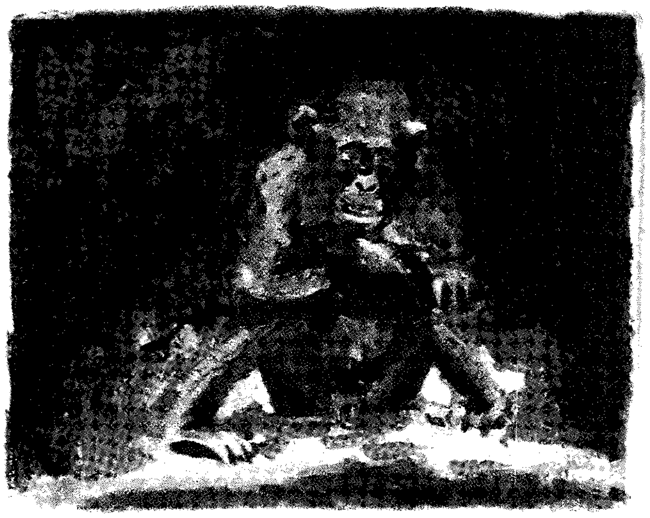

Voting for F.D.R.


Going to a Double Feature for 25¢

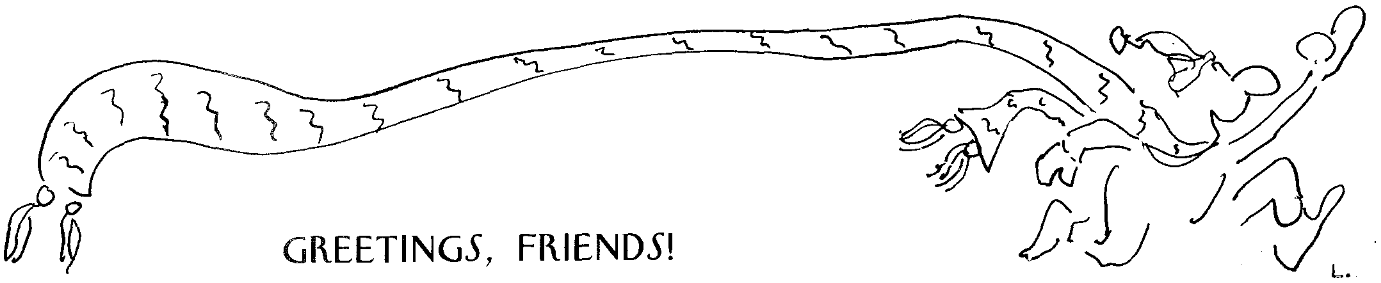

Fishing with Dad


Twirling a Baton


Watching "Howdy Doody"


Hanging Out with Jane Goodall

Huguette Martel



# GREETINGS, FRIENDS!

Honk-honk! Boop-boop! Stand back there, friend—
Here comes your bus around the bend
Into this stanza, right on time:
A rusty Greyhound heap of rhyme.
Its doors outswoosh before your gaze
And down the steps in mild amaze
Half falls a bard, the undersigned,
Who starts and peers, then beams to find
Old subscribers, here on hand,
Forgathered at this seedy stand—
Persona grata (noble faces!)
Come for Christmas and its graces.
Well, cheers, my dears, and season's mirth
To each of us and all on Earth.
Now since we're here I think we should
Aim jocund thoughts at Kimba Wood,
With wishes in the same refrain
For Maggie Smith and Ed McBain.
Happy Christmas, Cindy Sherman,
Phil Rizzuto, Uma Thurman!
Joy to the world and once again an
Accolade for Justice Brennan!
Bang the bells for good Bill Moyers,
k. d. lang, the David Soyers,
And some volunteer whose name is
Here to rhyme with Kingsley Amis.
Ah, there, Andrés Galarraga,
Billy Bragg, and Sonia Braga.
Yay, we say, for Dennis Barrie,
August Wilson, Peter Carey,
Aprile Millo, Helmut Kohl,
Don DeLillo, and Soul II Soul.
Cheers and beers and a panatela—
Here's to the Reds and Lou Piniella!
Say, Fay Vincent, how's for waivers
On gloomy days for Nigel Havers?
K. Kringle, have you toys to put
Within the sock of Shelby Foote?
Now, heav'nly choirs, would you deploy
And fling about some sounds of joy,
And make the lofty welkin clang
In praise of David Henry Hwang,
With carollings in dulcet tones
To Juice Newton, Bruce Diones,
Jeremy Irons, Warren Moon,
And the Lions of Cameroon,
While baritones arrange some thunder
For Curtis Strange and Stevie Wonder?
Good friends, come forth! The time insists
A bonfire of the shopping lists.
You're Santa, pal—let costs go hang!
We'll do up Christmas with a bang.
Without a care we'll meet John Guare
And roam the Place des Antiquaires,
And steal a bargain Biedermeier
For Harvey Gantt or Talia Shire;
Or jars from Baccarat on sale
For Joe Dumars and Crystal Gayle;
And Dumas *gâteaux*, good and plenty,
For Angelo Badalamenti.
Or grab a Meissen plate instead
To captivate the Grateful Dead.
From Twigs, a paper-white narcissus
Would thrill Bill Rigney and the missus,
While a case or two from Sherry-Lehmann
Might fight the flu for Morgan Freeman,
And help the sleave of care unravel
For Peter Weir and Václav Havel.
With Julee Cruise we might foresee
A useful hour at Agnès B.
Or, in more haste, with Alfred Brendel
Lay waste some racks at Saks or Bendel;
Then, famished, seeking lunch anon,
Eat chic-to-chic at Odeon.
Old Dinkinstown, of thee I sing!
While Santa does the tourist thing,
And hampers to the Hamptons fly,
This year I'm here—N.Y., N.Y.
Our Christmas we can keep a fine way,
Carolling around the Steinway
With Winona Ryder, Rita Dove,
The Richters (Mike, Sviatoslav),
And Kurt Masur, the baton-wielder,
In fugue fa-las with Cecil Fielder,
Laura Dern, Avery Corman,
And, yes, Ken Burns and Jessye Norman.
As this old year runs down its clock,
We'll walk the dog around the block
And, home again, refresh with Mumm's
Some nearer dears and drop-in chums,
Like Ron Fimrite (a beamish boy),
Seamus Heaney, Melinda Roy,
And, among them, to be briefer,
Mignon Dunn and Anselm Kiefer,
Nick Faldo, Waldo, Jesse Barfield,
Kurosawa, Xuxa, Garfield,
And Boris Yeltsin, over there,
With Lisa Simpson, our au pair!

These season's thoughts now elsewhere roam,
To men and women far from home,
While anxious armies, unknown dangers
Wait upon the world's arrangers.
Alone beneath the stilly flight,
Young soldiers stand their watch by night
And pray, with nations near and far,
That peace rise with the morning star.

—Roger Angell

# ANOTHER SHORT DAY IN LA LUZ

Ursula Bowles, with more than half the distance to La Luz left to travel, recognized a quick stab of pain below her diaphragm, and turned to contemplate the landscape rolling away behind her on the right. At the same moment Patricio Gómez, her seventeen-year-old driver, as if to confirm that a state of peril existed, said, "There is a deviation ahead."

Ursula turned to see a barrier, lettered "DESVIACIÓN," directly in front of them. A flagman waved them to the right, where a rough path, barely wide enough to accommodate a farmer's cart, had been chopped through cactus and nettles. Its dust-filled ruts curved out of sight.

"How long is this detour?" Ursula asked, and found that it continued as far as the town of El Refugio. The flagman and Patricio, standing at the road's edge for a better view, waved in the direction of the southern half of Mexico. Now a pickup truck and the local bus passed them, entered the detour, and disappeared in two separate hurricanes of dust.

Patricio, understanding her hesitation, which would never have been his, leaned into the car and said, "Señora, I know a shortcut."

When another bus passed them, Ursula said, "Yes, let us go that way." She imagined a smooth country lane, winding beside meadows and an occasional peach orchard.

They drove diagonally across an uncultivated field, and Patricio remarked, "Besides, we must consider the car." He looked at Ursula gravely. "A borrowed American Ford station wagon, only two years old, with its original paint and tires. Damage might have occurred on the *desviación* from stones like knives and thorns like spikes."

"Perhaps I should not have sold my car," Ursula said, clinging to the door as they descended into an arroyo. "In that case I would not have to borrow. Perhaps I should have driven to Mexico in my own car on some of those roads I used to know." Then, in less time than it took five goats to cross the dirt track in front of her, she installed herself at the wheel of cars in other places. First she drove skillfully around the blind curves and into the gullies of the Mexican mining town where she was born and raised. After that, without a second's pause, she was splitting the flat, red earth of a road in New Mexico, speeding down a mile-long, perfectly straight line, with her husband sitting, perfectly, beside her.

Now the last goat crossed, and the widow Bowles was in Mexico again, here by choice in back country on an unmapped road.

"Where are we?" she asked her driver.

"Do not preoccupy yourself, Señora," Patricio said. "I know this region well." He turned to stare at Ursula, and allowed his glance to rest on her profile. So white-haired, so frail, so slow to decide—was it possible she had steered, accelerated, and applied her brakes on the hazardous thoroughfares of Mexico, fording its barrancas, toiling up its mountain grades? Patricio asked Ursula the question she had more than once asked him. "Do you have a driver's license?"

She found the card in her purse and held it out to him, and even as he drove he examined her picture, her name, and her age. He nodded. "So you are permitted to drive." In this same tone, he had commented to his sister Altagracia, when woman's suffrage was made law, "So now you can run for governor."

Ursula glanced at the card. "For two more years," she said, and added, "Someday I'll borrow a car and drive up and down the old roads." And she might have remembered a few of them now, but a sign on the outskirts of a cluster of houses distracted her. "La Soledad," she told Patricio, as if he had no eyes. And ten minutes later she announced, "Los Dolores."

They were travelling along two ruts now, with their right wheels higher than their left, and from her vantage point Ursula discovered herself at eye level with cattle and horses, which looked up from cropping weeds to watch her pass. She put on her distance glasses, and made out a church dome and a silo directly ahead and, when they had almost reached the sign, informed Patricio that this was Las Lágrimas. "These names," she said. "All titles of the Virgin, I suppose."

Patricio said nothing. He had never heard of a Virgin of Tears and doubted that there was one. In any case, he saw no point in discussing religion with a woman nobody had ever seen at Mass.

Ursula believed that the three names had appeared in natural sequence, and repeated them to herself. Solitude, sorrow, and tears.

It was in the town of Tears that Patricio turned left at the cobbled plaza and, as if drawn by a magnet, bounced over potholes and gullies until they arrived at El Refugio and the paved road to La Luz.

Patricio looked back. "The *desviación* is well behind us," he said.

Miles and miles, Ursula silently agreed. But she had enjoyed the detour through the fields, had liked lowering her window to touch corn silk, to smell turned earth.

Even before the church and radio towers of La Luz came into view, Patricio asked the widow, "What must be done in the city today?"

Ursula found her list. On it were a number of items—telegraph office, oculist, and pharmacy—which she did not mention to Patricio at this time. She merely said, "The bank, the nursery for plants, and, of course, the market. I will have lunch at the *posada*, while you have a free hour." She believed there was no need for detail. Days in La Luz were all alike, passed in the dim interiors of shops and offices or under noon sun on the crowded, broken sidewalks, in heavy air that smelled of food and flowers.

At the bank, Patricio, who was tall and narrow, stood next to Ursula at a counter marked "CAMBIOS" and waved her check over the heads of people who had already waited in shifting disorder for more than half an hour.

"We should be given numbers and form a line," Ursula said, but Patricio, extending a long arm and hissing, "Psst, psst," at the cashier, was soon able to hand Ursula her pesos out of turn.

*"I don't trust a dog who doesn't shed."*

"*Dispénseme*," Ursula said to the pushing crowd, as Patricio knifed his way through. "I am sorry. Thank you."

A number of people turned their heads to stare. She is old, she is confused, they thought. What does she mean? Why be sorry?

"I MUST send a telegram," Ursula told Patricio, as if the idea had just occurred to her, and a moment later he found a place to park near the office, in the shade.

At Telégrafos Nacionales the dispatcher handed Ursula a form. "You are sending an international message," he said, but his client shook her head.

"The Federal District," she said, and produced from her purse a folded sheet of paper, covered with her daughter's dark, emotional script. Frances, hoping to insure privacy, had written her message in English. Without looking at the phrases her daughter had chosen to lure her lover to her bed again, Ursula handed this paper across the counter to the operator, who unfolded it and said, "This message will transmit more accurately in Spanish." He pushed the paper, together with a pencil and a yellow form, back to Ursula. She heard Fran's words of a few hours ago. "Please send it as soon as you can. It must be delivered today. He is about to leave Mexico City." Ursula hesitated, looking into the uninterested eyes of the dispatcher. "I would prefer not to read this," she wanted to say. "It is a message I myself would not send." But she knew such an argument would be useless. Why do mothers do these things for their children, especially their grown children, she asked herself, and took up the pencil and started to print.

"Francisco Alvarado Torres," she wrote, putting down Paco's full name, and under that the address of his apartment on the Avenida Victor Hugo in the capital. Even before she reached her daughter's headlong declarations of love and of her willingness to hide and lie indefinitely, Ursula crowded Paco's rooms with various women she imagined. Husky-voiced, widemouthed, honey-skinned, they left an echo of perfume in the hall, of a whisper behind bedroom doors. And now in the telegraph office, with a solitary fly circling her head, Ursula placed in Paco's bed her daughter Fran's latest rival—still in her teens no doubt, product of a convent school, long-lashed, innocent, a virgin until last night.

Frances Bowles, according to her mother's reluctant translation, went on to propose a rendezvous. Wherever you like, whenever you say, she begged. "Please," Fran had written, and "*Querido*," in Spanish, as her mother was writing it now.

Pride has abdicated, Ursula perceived, and this raging passion has spilled over into its place. She stopped writing for a moment to ask herself, How was I with Phil? Immediately, an image of her husband, dead three years, took shape at her side—his profile, complete with broken nose; the top of his head tan where his hair had thinned. She found herself turning to meet his unshakable blue glance, to reach for his quiet hands, to remember their touch.

What would I do to get him back? she silently inquired of the dispatcher, and, as clearly as she could, went on printing her daughter's words in Spanish. "Please," she translated for the second time.

Patricio entered the office from behind her just too late to read the message over her shoulder.

"Now where, Señora?" he said. "I am illegally parked."

"To the oculist," she said.

Outside the doctor's door a moment later, Ursula had further instructions. "While I'm here, please select a bougainvillea at the nursery. For the señora who has lent us the car."

Halfway back to the car, Patricio, without taking time to turn, lifted an arm in acknowledgment.

THE doctor's office, which occupied the two front rooms of his house, was cool and high-ceilinged. The waiting room had chairs for twelve patients, but all were empty when Ursula entered. Behind a desk at one side sat an utterly beautiful young woman, wearing thick horn-rimmed glasses on her sculptured nose and great golden loops swinging from her ears. On the floor at her side a boy of three or four, identical in profile and wearing heavy glasses of his own, played with the boxcars of a wooden train. The woman and child looked up as Ursula entered, and examined her with their myopic, spice-brown eyes.

"I have an appointment with the doctor," Ursula told the receptionist, whose name, according to a lettered sign on her desk, was Griselda. But before there was time for a response the telephone rang and a conversation followed.

Griselda looked up. "Forgive me,"

she said. "Your appointment is cancelled. There has been a death in the doctor's family," and at this, as though a floodgate had burst open, the calls began to come incessantly. Occasionally, Griselda had time for a few words of explanation. "The doctor's mother," she would say, or "Eighty-six years old," or, "After High Mass, the interment. Gallegos Brothers in charge."

Listening to the receptionist, Ursula reminded herself to talk to her daughter again. Though how could Frances have forgotten? On matters such as this, mother and child were in accord. No services or ceremonies—simple cremation, with the small sealed box that resulted carried across the border to the Southwestern hillside where, three years ago, living in New Mexico, she had taken Phil's. Nothing could have seemed more plain and ordinary at the time she had planned it, but today in La Luz, with church bells tolling the hour of one, a priest and four nuns visible through the doctor's window, and Griselda's repeated references to a cortège and the *panteón*, apprehension began to gnaw at Ursula. Would there be obstacles in a Catholic country? I must tell Frances again exactly what I want, she told herself, even if she is frantic about Paco. I must write it down and sign it.

While Griselda gravely informed callers of funeral details, Ursula, followed by the child, left her chair to study a group of framed pictures on the wall opposite the desk. She was surprised to find they were all of the same subject—a happy woman's round, cheerful face. But each portrait in the series of identical poses was flawed. One was entirely obscured by mist, one streaked by random clouds. An opaque black center half filled another. A wide circle of black hid most of the fourth.

"What do these pictures mean?" Ursula asked Griselda, who at last had found a moment to open her appointment book.

"They show how people see who have diseases of the eye," and Griselda went on to name some of them. "Astigmatism, cataracts, detached retina." She seemed to chant. "Glaucoma, macular degeneration."

Ursula stood before the pictures, hypnotized. Silently, the child separated the boxcars, one by one, from his train.

At this moment Patricio burst in, leaving the door open to street dust and sunlight. "*Qué tal?*" he said to the bespectacled child, and "*Vámonos*" to Ursula, who, taking an appointment card from Griselda, hurried after him into the midday crowd.

"Are you losing your sight?" Patricio asked as soon as he and his passenger were in the car.

"Oh, I think not," Ursula said, and then, "What is that smell?" Twisting in her seat, she saw that the entire space at the rear of the station wagon was wound about with a tangle of flowers and vines.

"Besides the bougainvillea, there are three honeysuckles," Patricio said, and he, too, looked back. "They are gifts from the proprietor of the nursery, because you and the other North American señoras buy so much from him."

The combined fragrances of the nurseryman's gifts were almost suffocating. Ursula lowered her window. "Where to now?" asked Patricio, and after a small pause she said, "The pharmacy."

Patricio offered his help. "I can make this purchase for you, while you rest in the patio of the hotel." Ursula shook her head. "I prefer to do it myself," she said.

From the driver's seat, Patricio observed the passenger beside him. So rich and old and weak, he remarked to himself, and so obstinate.

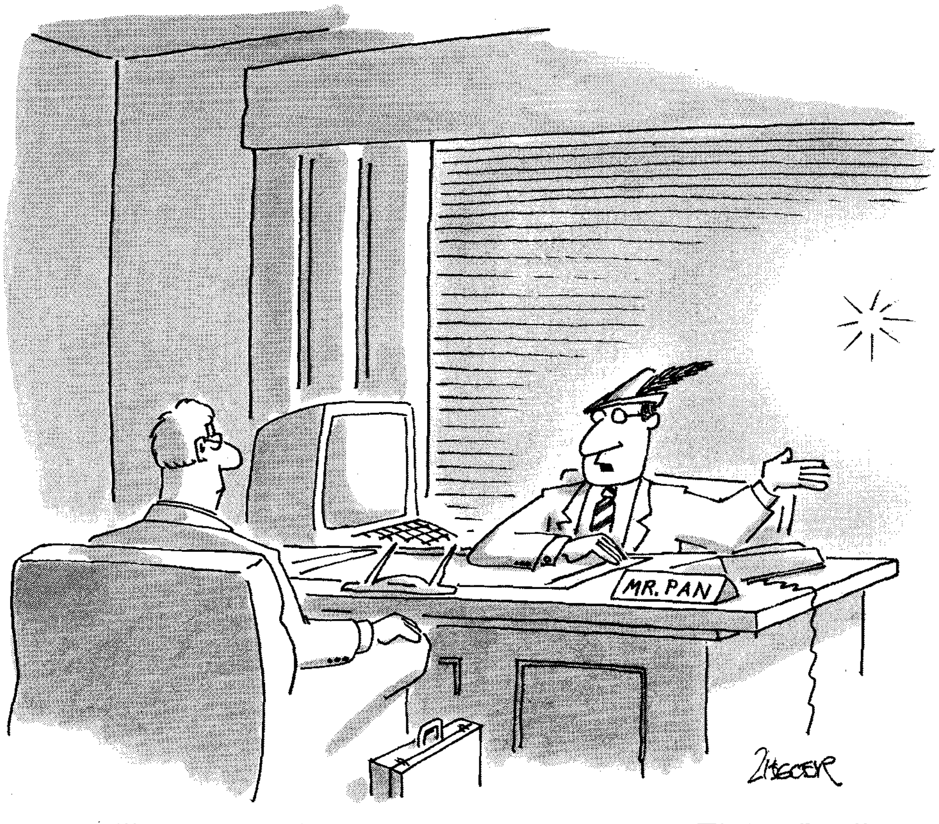
Before entering the pharmacy Ursula handed him a shopping list and a quantity of money. "This should cover everything," she told him. "What you buy at the market, and your own lunch as well." Then, as though noticing his habitual leanness for the first time, she asked where he ate in La Luz.

Patricio said, "At Un Taco Más," though in actuality he intended to take his midday meal at the house of his mother's cousin and save this money for an emergency.

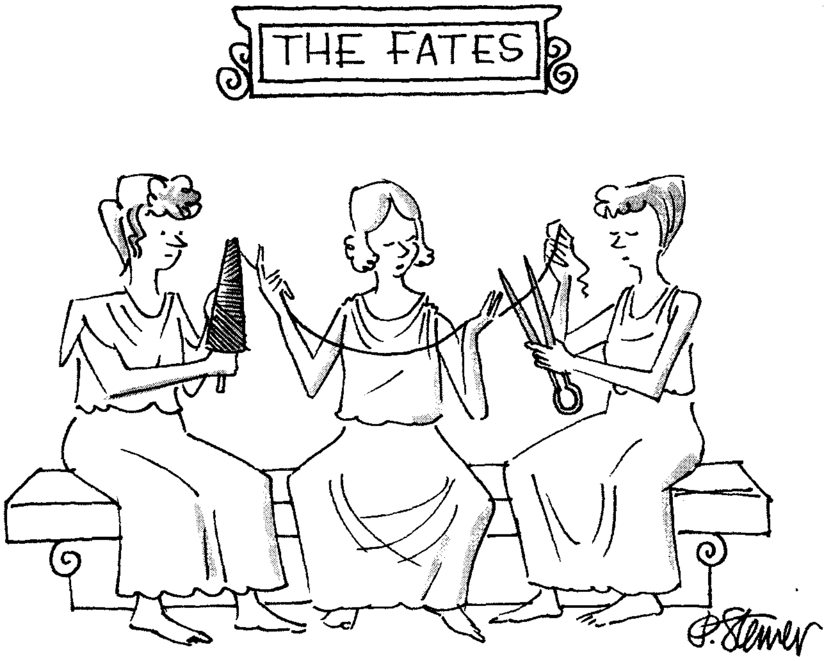
"Let us meet at the *posada* at three," Ursula said, and watched him turn the corner in the flower-scented car.

THE Farmacia Buen Salud was situated next to a music store. Even inside the pharmacy, strains of music could sometimes be heard when a patron of one shop and a patron of the other opened the street doors simultaneously.

Ursula, stepping from the shadeless glare of the sidewalk into the shadowed room, thought at first that she was the pharmacy's only customer. Then she saw the proprietor at the far end of the counter, attending to a bent old woman, who was wearing two shawls,



*"I believe you've already met my associate, Tinker Bell."*



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two skirts, and no shoes. In his hand was a glass of water and a bottle. His ancient client held up a bony forefinger, and the pharmacist shook out a single pill. Ursula watched the old woman extract coins from a knot in her *rebozo*, lay them on the counter, pick up the pill and the glass, and swallow.

The pharmacist, a man with a brooding air of disillusion, now approached Ursula. "Can I help you, Señora?"

In order to conceal the true purpose of her presence here, she began with ordinary purchases. "Adhesive tape," she said. "Hand lotion, a toothbrush."

The pharmacist collected these things and placed them on the counter. "What more?" he said.

Ursula, looking first at a display of cough syrup, then at an apothecary jar filled with a purple liquid, eventually said, "Something for pain."

"Do you have a doctor's prescription?" he asked, and she shook her head.

Through his sombre eyes, the pharmacist examined her face. "Where is the pain?"

Ursula waved vaguely at the area between her shoulders and her hips. "What I need is something stronger than aspirin," she said.

The pharmacist allowed his gaze to rest on the apothecary jar.

"Consider this, Señora," he said. "I cannot diagnose the cause of pain. I can only sell the medicine to alleviate it."

"That is all I ask of you," she said.

The pharmacist then disappeared into his dispensary, and came back with white capsules.

"No more than two a day," he instructed her. "And here are the cards of some excellent local doctors."

At this mention of local doctors, an image of the recently installed government interne at Amapolas sprang into Ursula's mind. She saw his young face, his troubled eyes. "Señora, are you losing weight?" the interne asked.

At the moment when Ursula pushed open the pharmacy door, two customers entered the music shop. From the sidewalk she heard a mariachi band playing "Ojos Tapatíos." "How I love that song," she said out loud in English, and a passerby turned to stare.

THE Posada del Sol was only five blocks from the pharmacy and Ursula was halfway there when she noticed a sign on her left. "GALLEGOS HERMANOS, FUNERALES," she read in gold-and-black letters on the glass front door. Seeing this as a lucky encounter, Ursula crossed the street. She found the three Gallegos brothers standing together just inside the door.

They bowed, shook her hand, and asked her to come back at four. "It is past the hour for lunch," they told her, and pointed to a clock with golden hands and a golden pendulum as witness.

"I have only one simple question," Ursula said, and held up her right hand as though to detain them. She merely wished to know if their services included cremation, but the necessary words were not in her vocabulary, and in the end she simply said "fire" and "burn" and, a moment later, "ashes."

The Gallegos brothers, black-suited and bald, were shocked into silence by this stripping away of euphemism. This old woman, so close to death and to purgatory, the eyes of each said to the eyes of the others. So willing to disappear into eternity and leave no trace behind, their eyes agreed.

"You are disturbed, Señora," said one Gallegos.

"Let us talk later," said another.

"Yes, after lunch—at four o'clock," said the third.

They bowed, escorted her to the door, and called out after her, "Until then."

SEATED in the dining room of the *posada* at a small table in the rear, Ursula reached into her deep straw bag for the pharmacist's pills. This was the time to take one, for she was alone, had just now suffered sudden pain, and had a glass of water at hand. But all at once a man was at her side, saying, "Señora, will you join me?" and here was Enrique Ortiz de León. Ursula, wearing her reading glasses for the menu, stared up at him half blindly, then removed them and noticed how handsome the heir to the hacienda at Amapolas still was. Straight brows, straight nose, straight neck—he reminded her of something, perhaps an eagle.

If only Frances were attracted to a stable man like this one, she found herself thinking, and then, imagining the two together, Have I gone mad?

Three minutes later she was at his table. Don Enrique, without wasting time, ordered seviche, tortilla soup, and rice with chicken for them both. "And *vino blanco*," he told Violeta, the new waitress, long and slender as a sugarcane stalk.

Ursula protested, "Oh, no, I can't eat so much," but Don Enrique, choosing not to hear, merely passed her the hard rolls. "*Salud*," they said to each other when the wine came, and they touched glasses.

"Have you accomplished all you wished to do in La Luz?" he asked.

Ursula, thinking of the oculist, the pharmacy, and the Gallegos Brothers, shook her head. Only the cashing of the check, the purchase of the bougainvillea, and the sending of the telegram were done. As for the three other matters, much remained unresolved.

"The oculist had been called away," she told him.

Immediately Don Enrique, like Patricio, said, "Are you losing your sight?" and again she answered, "Oh, I think not."

"My mother was blind for a year before she died," Don Enrique said. "Her hearing became so acute that she could identify visitors by their footsteps alone, long before they spoke."

The widow knew she would try this. One day, she would close her eyes and, using the correct name, say "Good morning" to her daughter, to Altagracia and Patricio, the priest, the doctor, the mayor.

Don Enrique ate slowly, and slowly drank three glasses of wine. He spoke of the weather and the economy.

A shadow fell across the table, and Ursula, looking up through the window, observed a gathering of clouds. Certain she could eat no more, she laid down her fork. "You have always lived in this town," she said to her companion.

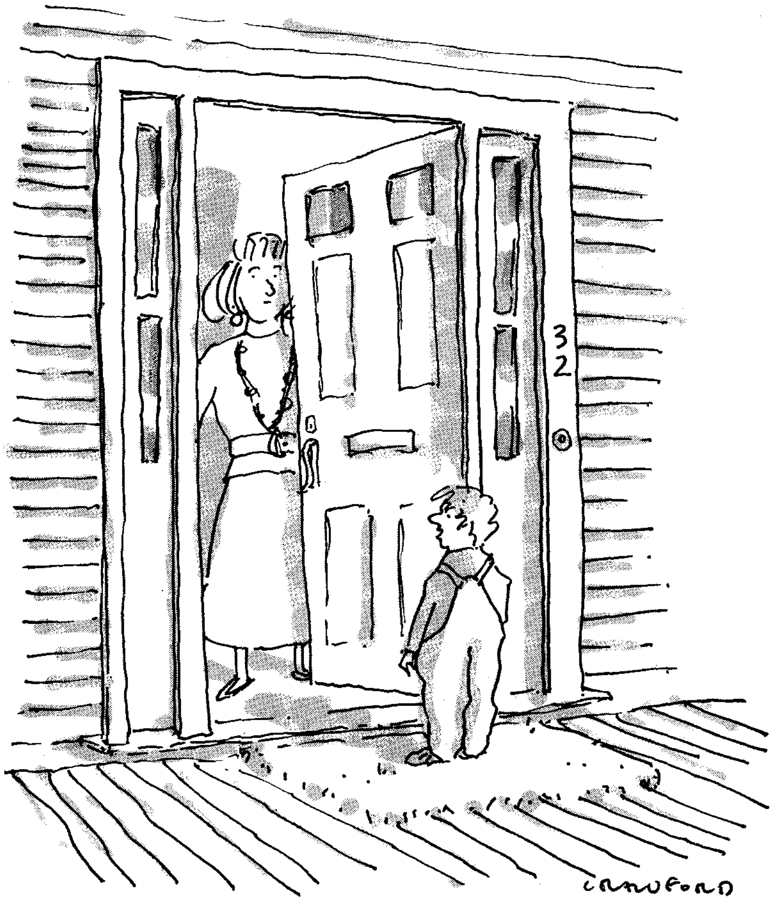
"No, no," he said. "As a child I travelled abroad with my parents."

"Where did you go?" Ursula asked, and at this, to her astonishment, a torrent of recollection poured from Don Enrique.

"To the Eiffel Tower," he said. "The Tower of London, the Alhambra, Napoleon's tomb." Don Enrique went on, "And the restaurants." He named a few, and Ursula began to recognize, in his voice and in his eyes, the banked embers of nostalgia. At the same moment, as though a contagion had spread in the dining room of the Posada del Sol, the widow fell into her own fever of recall.

"Did you ever eat at the Ferme Saint-Jacques, in the south of France?" she asked him, but he shook his head and went on to remember the Leaning Tower and the Roman Forum. With attentive eyes on her host's face, Ursula Bowles withdrew to a hill above the Mediterranean, where she sat at a table with her husband, Philip, at the outer edge of a flagstone court. On one side of them more diners sat at tables; on the other an abrupt slope, terraced with grapevines and olive trees, dropped straight down to the sea.

Half-listening to Don Enrique and wearing a fixed smile, Ursula fished the depths of her memory to discover the exact blue of the sea that day, the precise blue of the sky. How was it then, she asked herself. How was that day in France?



*"Terri invited me over. We're going to play doctor of humane letters."*

Peering through her memory's eye, she believed she saw short-stemmed field flowers crowded into a shallow bowl on the table. She recalled earthenware plates and copper pans. What were the Gallic miracles they ate? What was the ambrosia that they drank? But clearer than the food, clearer than the wine, what Ursula recovered at this instant, four thousand miles from France, was the accurate image of their waiter on that sapphire day at the Ferme Saint-Jacques. So sharp were the outlines of this hallucination that he might as well have stood beside her here, in this other dining room.

The French waiter was wiry, lithe, and fierce. His eyes blazed a passionate black. He wore a pirate's sweeping black mustache. Ursula watched him bound up and down the steps to the kitchen. She thought she remembered the courses he brought—the pâté, the soup, the fish, the young lamb, the wines. "All this is from the *ferme*," the waiter told them. "The wine, too." And the young Ursula and the young Philip nodded, trying to believe. Now the sun sank away from its zenith, the day declined, and the Bowleses asked for their bill.

"We can eat no more," they told their waiter.

"There is still dessert," he said, and he sternly recited the choices.

"We cannot. It is impossible. *L'addition, s'il vous plaît.*"

At this, heads of thrifty French at nearby tables turned to stare, for there was a fixed price.

"One moment," the waiter said.

"He has gone for his cutlass," Ursula told Philip.

But he returned quietly with two plates and five platters. "*Les cinq desserts obligatoires*," he said, and he placed a spoonful of each on the plates.

From a provincial town in Mexico, the

widow Bowles, bending her glance around the curve of the earth and finding the south of France, conjured up the waiter's quick black eyes, his wide smile white with teeth.

Don Enrique interrupted. "You are smiling," he said. "You, too, have travelled to Copenhagen," and she nodded, though it was a city she had never visited.

"We will both have *flan*," Don Enrique told Violeta, who for half an hour had hovered patiently nearby.

The widow rose from her chair. "Oh, not for me," she said. "Thank you. You have been so kind. But I believe Patricio is here," and, as if to prove her truthful, her driver entered the hotel at this instant and could be seen standing restless in the lobby.

"You are late, Señora," he said as they walked to the car. "The lettuce and spinach are wilting and the strawberries beginning to rot." He opened the door on the right.

But halfway there Ursula stopped. "I will drive," she said. Patricio handed her the keys.

*"Great money scenes!"*

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AND so they travelled the road back to Amapolas. As she drove, Ursula was aware of an unexplained delight trembling in her bones. She made no attempt to analyze this sensation, but for an hour or two it turned her young. She sped down the highway to each arroyo and up the grade to the next rise. The tangle of flowering vines, their fragrance subsiding, occupied the rear of the car; three market baskets, heavy with fruit and vegetables, filled the back seat. Looking straight ahead, Patricio sat sombrely beside her as she passed trucks and slowed for burros. Ursula understood his mood. For the time being, his only wish was not to be seen as a passenger in a car she was driving.

They left the highway twice, once to buy gas and once for a detour. At the gas station, a boy of six removed his shoes, climbed onto the hood, and polished her windshield with his shirtsleeve and a wet newspaper. Patricio watched her hand the child coins.

"Señora, you tip too much," he said, and, a few moments later, "Another *desviación*."

The detour they had to take, unlike this morning's, was short. They travelled through its dust for only a few miles. When they were at midpoint, Patricio said, "On the right is my great-uncle's farm." And he went on to give Ursula further family information. "When my great-uncle knew he had cancer and could not wait to die of it, he hanged himself in the *bodega*." Patricio pointed to the storeroom, a square adobe structure behind the longer, low adobe house. "In there," he said. "By a rope from a rafter. One of his grandchildren found him. Carlos, seven years old." Patricio's eyes were on the widow.

She said, "What a terrible thing."

Patricio had more. "Now Carlos has lost his speech." And Ursula said, "Poor child."

"Two weeks have passed since the suicide," Patricio went on, "and still not a word from Carlos."

But the widow Bowles did not rage against fate, as he had expected. Instead, she accepted this tragedy. She might have been Mexican herself.

Ursula understood that Patricio was punishing her, and, once back on the paved road, she changed places with him. So she was not driving when the pain, now grown familiar, struck again. Later on, she would take the first pill.

BY the time they reached the house on the edge of the mesa at Amapolas, dusk was coming on. Patricio carried in her basket and one honeysuckle, and drove away to deliver the rest.

But before leaving he commented on the trip. "Another short day in La Luz," he said. "Only a few hours, and so much done."

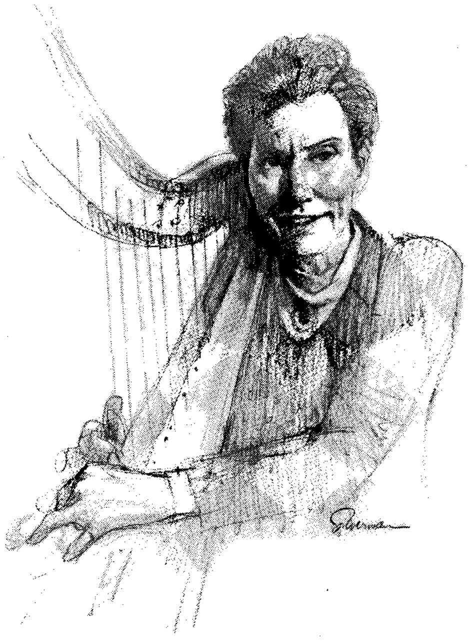
As soon as he left, Ursula went to her terrace to watch the day end. She saw that a sunset had begun to streak the western sky with color, and turned to look for its reflection, like an echo, on the opposite horizon. Only when she moved a chair to face the eastern hills did she realize how tired she was, and at the same time how oddly filled with joy.

Today had stopped happening. Already it had consigned its events to memory. Untouched by the evening chill, she sat outside until dark, wrapped in the mists of her brief, uncertain future and the brilliant patchwork of her never-ending past.

—HARRIET DOERR

# PROFILES

## HARP LADY



WHEREVER she goes, Daphne camps out. She even slips in and out of her names. She was born Daphne Bayne but became Daphne Bull. After that, she was Daphne Hellman, then Daphne Shih. Now she is known by her friends and colleagues simply as Daphne. They all know who they are talking about when they run into one another and say "How's Daphne?" or "Daphne has a bad cold" or "Daphne just left for Australia." She is a woman of means, who owns three houses—one in the East Sixties; one on a hilltop in St. James, Long Island; and one on another hilltop, in Truro, on Cape Cod—but she never stays in any of them long. She may light in Manhattan for four or five days, then drive out to St. James, but only for a night or two. (Her adopted son, Digger St. John, lives there.) Or she'll run down South for a series of one-nighters with her trio, Hellman's Angels (Daphne on harp, Eddie Berg on guitar, Lyn Christie on bass). Or she'll do Russia or India or Australia or Sri Lanka with the trio. Or she'll look in on her son Benjy Bull, a greatly talented guitarist, who lives in Brentwood, California. Or she'll run over to Paris for a couple of weeks and play her harp on the street with the violinist Colette Lepage and the bassist Jack Gregg. (Daphne's daughter, Daisy Paradis, a gifted sitar player, is living there now, too.) Or she'll go on an Earthwatch expedition to Kenya or Madagascar or China or Panama. But there are three absolutes in her life: New York (through her Bayne Fund she contributes to the Metropolitan Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, the Bronx Zoo, and the Museum of the City of New York); the harp; and the Village Gate, where she has appeared every Tuesday (when she is in town) for twenty-eight years. (It may be the longest-running nightclub gig in the history of New York.)

On a recent Tuesday morning, not long after she had taken her daily outing on roller skates, Daphne talked about harps and harpists in her New York living room: "Everyone knows what a harp looks like, but not many people know how difficult it is to play. There are six or seven octaves on the average concert harp, and each octave has seven strings. The strings are colored: the C's are red, the F's blue, and so on. Without this, it would be hard to tell where you are. You pluck the strings with your thumbs and with the first three fingers of each hand—the pinkies are too short and weak. The strings are regulated by seven pedals, placed in a semicircle at the base of the post and attached to rods inside the post, which are hooked to the strings by little pins. One pedal controls the C strings, one the D's, and so forth. Each pedal can be depressed two notches, and each notch shortens the string a half-tone. The harp is tuned in C-flat, so if you depress the C pedal one notch you get a C, and two notches gives you a C-sharp. That is the great difficulty of harp playing: you have to think with your feet.

"There are eight thousand harpists in this country and they make a cozy, intense world. Harpists work in symphony orchestras and in the studios and in hotels and leisure places. A good gold concert harp can cost twenty thousand dollars. I'm lucky enough to be able to buy harps, and I keep one here, one in St. James, and one in Truro. There's another at the Metropolis Café, on Union Square, where I play Sunday lunches, one at the Gate, and one at Kitty O'Shea's little restaurant near my house. I also have a travelling harp in my van. And I've rented one out to the 'Fantasticks' company for years, at eighty dollars a month."

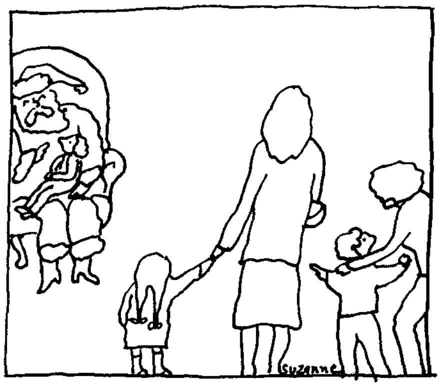
Daphne's living room is nearly two stories high and has floor-to-ceiling windows on the south which look into a garden. A gold harp, an upright piano, an electric keyboard, and a Gravikord were gathered against the east side of the room. (The Gravikord is a stringed instrument shaped like a fishing rod which was invented by her friend the trombonist Bob Grawi. She uses it when she plays in the subway.) On the walls were a William Burroughs abstraction, a Warren Miller cartoon of a big band made up of eighteen accordionists and a drummer, an early Paul Resika oil of a Cape Cod beach, a Saul Steinberg interior, an Al Hirschfeld drawing of Daphne at her harp, and, in a corner, a small Robert White terra-cotta sculpture of Digger St. John. Daphne does not believe in spending money on furniture, and the various pieces in the room looked exhausted. She loves birds, and on an end table next to her was a big birdcage containing an African glossy starling. She said that she bought the bird thirteen years ago, and that it not only sings, it barks. She also said that she had owned an English blackbird that sang at four-thirty every morning in the spring. At one time, she had so many large birds in the living room and adjacent kitchen that they tended to outshout the humans, causing her old friend Rogers Whitaker to describe the place as "helter-skelter palace." Daphne herself is birdlike. She has a narrow, handsome face and short blond hair. Although she probably weighs under a hundred pounds, she is still shapely, and has a firm grip and a viola voice. She loves to laugh, and she talks with the explosive frankness of someone who has taken long inward looks and found what she saw acceptable.

"My mother was responsible for getting me started on the harp," she continued. "I was born in New York, in

1915, right in my parents' apartment, at 820 Park. I had a sister, Betty, who was four years older. When I was seven and she was eleven, our parents moved us to Morristown, New Jersey, so that we wouldn't get any more colds, but, of course, we got everything. My father's name was Howard Bayne. He was one of five children, and he was born in Ireland. His father, Samuel Bayne, had a house on Riverside Drive, and he had a parrot that bit us and laughed when we cried. My father's sister Emily married an English architect and member of Parliament, Lord Alfred Bossom. When Winston Churchill first heard the name, he asked how to spell it, and said, 'Well, it's neither one nor the other, is it?' My father was handsome and short and straight-featured. He had a flashing smile and blue-green eyes. He liked to drink, and when he did he became conversational. When he was in his late sixties, he was told to stop drinking and smoking, but it didn't work for him. He had wanted to be an electrical engineer, but his father made him go into banking, and he did. My grandfather had a hand in founding the Chase Manhattan Bank, and he had also worked in the oil fields and published a book about it, called 'Derricks of Destiny.' My mother was Louise Van Beuren, and she was born at 21 West Fourteenth Street. One of her brothers was a surgeon at Presbyterian Hospital, and another cut a swath in Newport. My mother had mucho money. I adored her when I was little. She was not pretty, but she was tall and vivacious and had expressive eyebrows. She talked a great deal. My sister and I were very close, but we each had our own governess, and they were rather mean to us. Mine made me take long, lonely walks, and she didn't like me to see my friends. But of course we learned to speak French. When I was around nine, Mother started to be critical of everything—whether we were clean, how we dressed, our manners. I took refuge in animals. I began collecting bats, which I'd find behind shutters. I still love them. They are much maligned and misunderstood. And I sent away for armadillos."

When she was ten, Daphne kept a diary, and she still has it. It has a nice Daisy Ashford ring. Here is her first meeting with a bat (the entry is dated Friday, April 3, 1925; the place is Morristown): "One morning I woke up and went to see my pets, and looking in my basin of fish I saw two dark objects trying to get out. I took them and put them on my pillow and peted and kissed them but one bit me. I looked closly and saw that my visitors had wings and very big ears, a darling but very wicked face, sharp white teeth, sharp claws and soft brown fur. Now that they were dry I saw that they were bats. Evidently they had flown in the window and trying to get a drink, fell in for bats need much water. Then they flew around the room and we put blankets around our heads for fear they should get in our hair. They got behind the screens and scrached themselves then hiched on to the heater and made faces at us. That afternoon I caught them and let them go. They looked like spiders when they were on the floor."

Leaning forward, Daphne continued, "I went first to the Peck School, in Morristown, then to Ethel Walker's for a year. I whined that it was too strict, so I was put in Farmington, which I really liked. From there I went to Chapin, in New York, and in the winter of 1933-34 I came out. I decided I wanted to try acting, and I enrolled in the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, and after that I went to the Royal Academy in London for a year. I had a walk-on part in Leslie Howard's 'Hamlet,' in New York, which didn't get very good reviews. Then I met my first husband, Harry Bull. He was the editor of *Town & Country*, and he was eleven years older than I was. My family didn't think much of Harry, but I married him anyway. I was twenty-one. He was a strange man, very sarcastic, but I was an awful wife. Unfaithful. I modelled for *Harper's Bazaar* and for *Town & Country*. I modelled for Man Ray. Jerome Zerbe photographed me. I was a cover girl. I started to dye my hair blond and tried to look like Veronica Lake.



"I had a stillborn child in 1939, because I was Rh-negative; then Benjy Bull was born. In 1940, I fell in love with Geoffrey Hellman, a *New Yorker* writer. He was a tall lighthouse of a fellow whose only sin was eating. When Benjy was two, Harry Bull, who had detectives watching Geoffrey and me, quit *Town & Country*, kidnapped Benjy, and moved to Florida. Benjy didn't live with me again until he was ten. Geoffrey and I were married in Reno in 1941, and his mother came on our honeymoon. My sister married three money men, and I married three literary men. Geoffrey was in the O.S.S. during the war, and we lived in Washington, D.C., and got to know people like Eddie Newhouse and Saul Steinberg and Robert Lewis Taylor. I had taken classical harp lessons with Mildred Dilling for years, but had given up the harp in my teens; the Spanish harpist Nicanor Zabaleta had a great deal to do with getting me back to it. When we returned to New York after the war, I played in a concert at Town Hall with the diseuse Marianne Oswald. *Time* said I was 'as curvesome as a treble clef.' I began getting a lot of work as a harpist. In the fifties I started studying jazz harp with Phyllis Pinkerton, who had been taught by Lennie Tristano. She made me sing intervals and clap two against three and practice with a metronome. She made me sing along with Lester Young records, then sing the solos without the records. And she made me play along with his solos, then play them by myself.

"I played with Ving Merlin and his All-Girl Band at the Hotel New Yorker, and I was at Billy Rose's Diamond Horseshoe. Then I came under Julius Monk's jovial management, and worked at the Upstairs at the Downstairs with Julius and Stella Brooks and Imogene Coca and Blossom Dearie and Annie Ross. And I worked at the Ruban Bleu and the Versailles and Le Perroquet. Summers, we all went to the Atlantic House in Provincetown. Norman Mailer was there, and Tennessee Williams, and Hugh Shannon. Daisy Hellman was born to Geoffrey and me in 1946, and in 1951 I adopted Digger St. John. He was a three-year-old Irish baby, and I found him largely through

# AT MUKER, UPPER SWALEDALE

To be wet was to be captive, idle and poor. To be dry was to be free, industrious and comfortable. This was the lesson of the drowning cell.—*"The Embarrassment of Riches," by Simon Schama.*

The farmer with his milk pail
pausing, a fine rain falling,
burnishing with wet the wind-
nipped roof slates, fingering
the chimney-clumps of dwellings

following no plan or pattern
but that of having sat down,
one by one, as sheep would,
in the moor's high, wall-
ribbed, uncomfortable lee:

so it appears to one come as,
though country-bred, a stranger,
to trudge the solitude of footpaths,
then early bed and, out of rural
sleep, dreams that are frantic

as Muker Beck aswirl, hurtling
to enter the River Swale: peat-
dark in spate, hour by hour
engorged with braidings, with
sheeted seethings of rainfall

fallen yet again: the trickle
of the damp's wrung increment
down limestone's fluted hollows
(buttertubs is what the locals
call them) that pock the pass

along the road to Askrigg—
slow, muted, single droplets
like bird notes after dark,
filterings ringleted with
brunet-stemmed spleenwort,

ageless as the lamb's cry,
the bees' noise, the lisp
of aeons. Strange, the lone
lapwing, the streamside fox-
glove, the harebell by the

roadside, the pale-eyed piebald
Swaledale breed, met up with
in one knockdown gathering,
the herdsman's yell (*Git in,
git in, git in, ye buggers*),

the neat small sheepdog doing
what it's bred for, all strange—
even the farmer's quasi-gentlemanly
tweed and Wellingtons: it's only
the milk pail takes me back to

the matriarchal smell of it,
warm from the udder; to manure-
pile, barnyard and stanchion,
green reek of silage, green
scum on the horse-trough,

year-round wall-sweat of old
farmhouses; to pump, sink,
cistern, slop pail for pigs,
the human slop jar, the gray
interminable hank of mildew.

Well, that's changing. Indoor
shivers give way (even here,
now that the heating's central)
to plush, florid wall-to-wall,
rippling fake fire, the daylong

warbling of the telly; to a
comfort wishfully aspired
toward, become no more than
the way we all—or if not all,
then most, or if not most,

the icons of our surrogate
existence—live now. Think,
though, of that roamer in the
rainy deserts of this shire,
the never-to-be-comfortable

George Fox, sworn enemy of
easy livings, of the steeple-
house's dry doldrums—who,
acquainted with the stink of
anybody in a state of nature,

a prisoner wading ankle-deep
in excrement, envisioning
beyond these elements a
heavenly rain descending,
aspired toward pure fire.

—Amy Clampitt

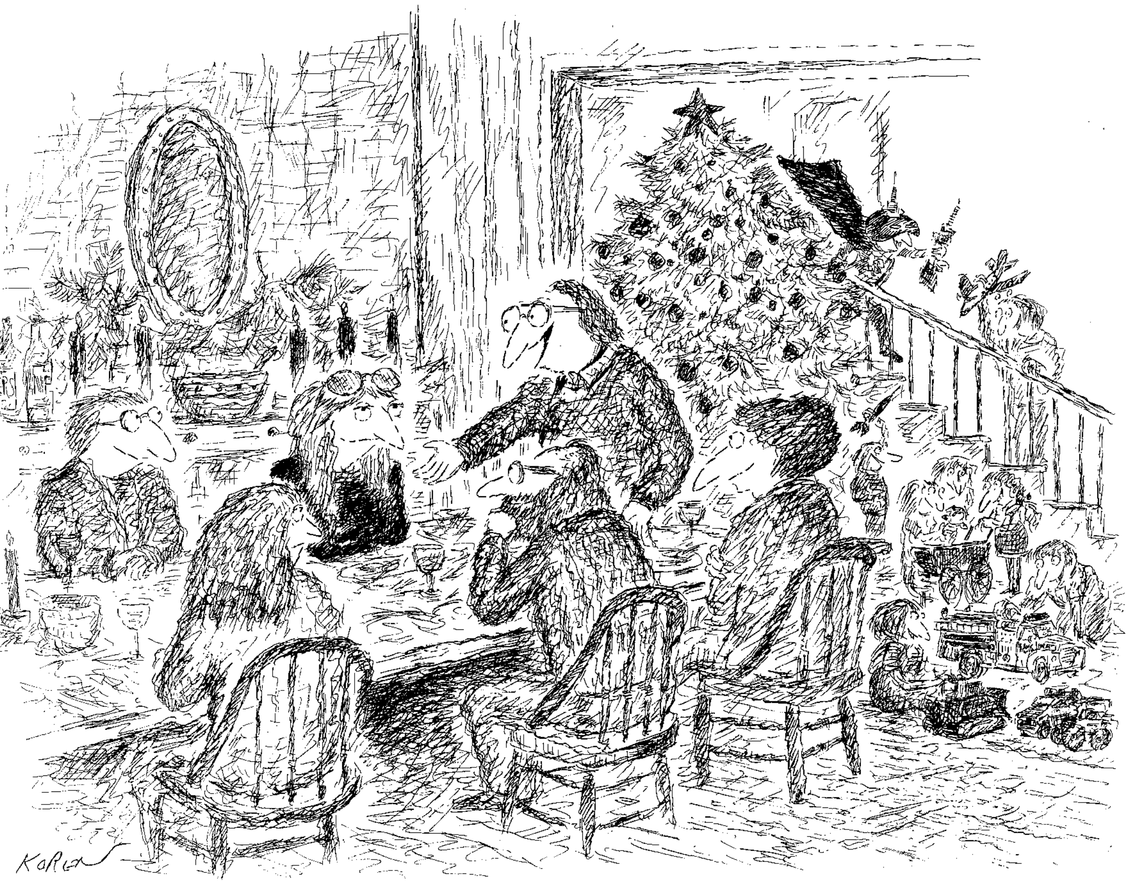
• •

John McCarten's sister, who lived in Ireland. Geoffrey had a lot of lady friends and I had men friends, and we made the mistake of telling each other what we were doing. Geoffrey decided, finally, that he wanted a divorce, and he remarried. In 1961, I married Hsio-Wen Shih, a brilliant architect and writer, but one day in 1965 he just disappeared. I was devastated. People have told me that they have seen him in England, but I have never heard a word from him since, and he has never touched a penny of the trust fund I set up for him. I have had a lot of beaux since then—an art dealer, a psychiatrist, a writer—but I'm still married to Wen."

PEOPLE love to talk about Daphne. Here are three voices. The first belongs to Marty Hall, a painter who divides her time between a tiny apartment in the East Eighties and a house she shares in Wellfleet with her husband, Jack, who is also a painter. "I like Daphne because she's an original, and she has this enormous energy," she said the other day. "I like it that she has played the harp so eclectically. She's a total performer. She's headstrong, and she does what she wants. Jack remembers her from dancing-school days in New York. She was very beautiful and very shy. Up until about ten years ago, this shyness made it difficult to carry on a relaxed conversation with her, particularly on the telephone. But in groups she has always had great social poise. I think she must be deeply lonely, or she wouldn't run so."

The second voice is that of the pianist and producer Julius Monk, who is retired and lives under the eaves of the Parc Vendome, on West Fifty-seventh Street. He is a courtly Southerner who speaks in the old orotund way: "I think I gave Daphne her first professional job. It was at the Ruban Bleu when it was in the Hotel Langdon, at Fifty-sixth and Fifth. The war was still on, and Geoffrey was in Washington. She took a tiny suite in the hotel, and on opening night there was this blond goddess, this tableau on that tiny stage. After the war, we played at the Boeuf sur la Toit in Paris. We did Jerome Kern, and to keep her out of trouble we glissed a great deal. Daphne worked the Ruban Bleu twice a year, and once when she was there we hired Billie Holiday. I believe it was Billie's East Side début, and we had a terrible time with her opening night, because she was zonked and refused to share our only dressing room with Daphne. She said, 'I'm not going in that dressing room with that East Side lady'—only she didn't use the word 'lady.' Daphne accepts conditions and people and backgrounds as they are. She faces things and is astonishingly brave. I've seen her do any number of kind things for any number of people. I think at times she has been musically unfulfilled, but she is always questing."

Saul Steinberg issues his extraordinary visions from his studio in Springs, Long Island. He is an acute observer, and his Romanian English makes whatever he says sound like law. "I met Daphne in 1942 or 1943," he said not long ago. "I had my first show in America at Betty Parsons' gallery in New York, and she and Geoffrey came and bought two pictures. That was a big thing, you know. In one of the pictures I made a satire of a *National Geographic* magazine cover—a geographer looking at nudity, which was a big feature of the *Geographic* at that time. I was stationed in Washington briefly in 1945, and I saw her and Geoffrey there. I started going to her parties when she bought her house on the East Side. The living room was very formal and elegant then, and had a winding staircase going down to a big dining room. These parties, sui generis, became a kind of salon. There were writers and musicians and artists and publishers. Geoffrey began to behave like the husband of a woman who keeps a salon. He had the attitude of someone visiting a kindergarten. Then he would retire upstairs to bed. I admired Daphne because she reminded me of one of those hillbilly jeep drivers in the service—skinny, tough, and driving like a cowboy."



*"Catherine would like to share some holiday thoughts with us on the subject of gender-neutral toys."*

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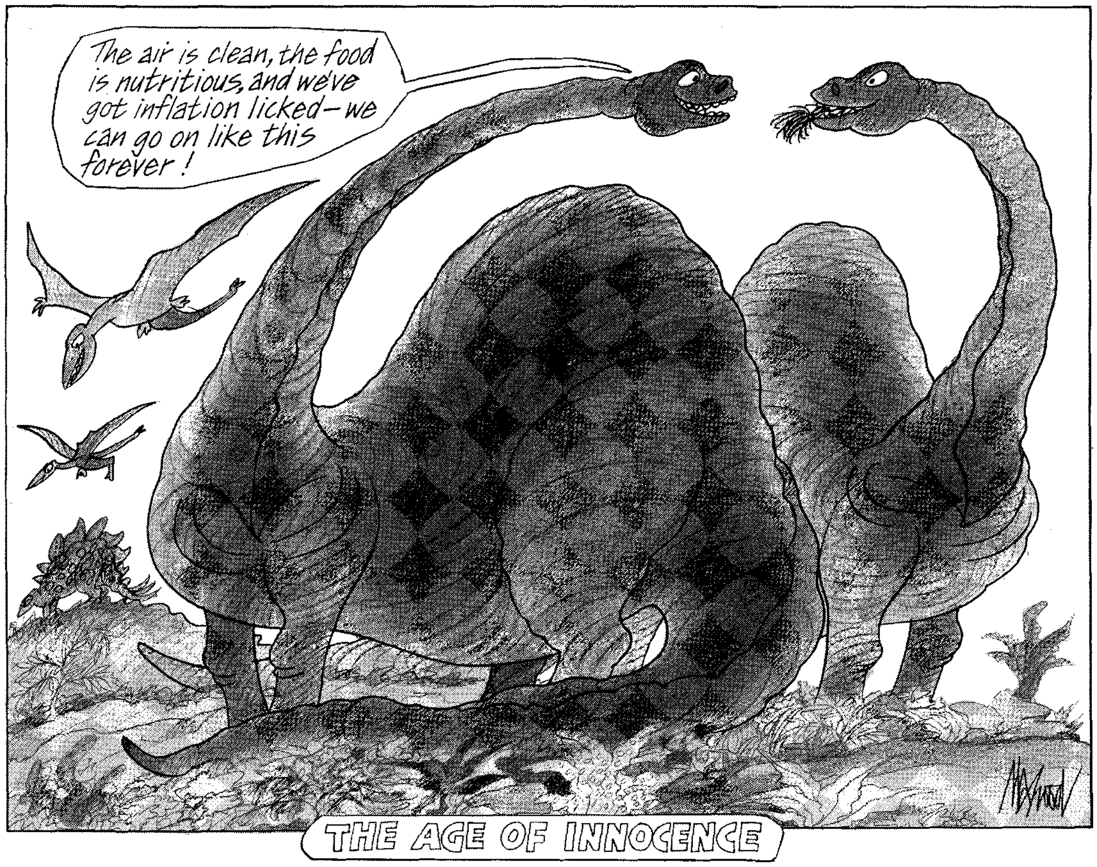
THE African starling barked, and Daphne told it to be quiet. The bird must have reminded her of Africa and Earthwatch. "Tee Addams, Charlie Addams' widow, took me on my first Earthwatch expedition, in 1980," she said. "Earthwatch was started in 1971. It asks interested people like me to go on scientific expeditions as paying volunteers and worker-observers. The purpose of our trip was to study the social behavior of the spotted hyena in Kenya. The expedition was run by Dr. Laurence Frank, of Berkeley, and there were twelve of us, including a college-textbook writer, some arrogant Sierra Club people, and several zoology students. Before you go on any Earthwatch you are given explicit do's and don'ts. I came across the briefing for the Kenya Earthwatch the other day, and here's the cautionary part: 'Don't go into water over your knees. Crocodiles like knees. Don't step out of a vehicle in tall grass without reconnoitering first (lions and other animals are well camouflaged). . . . Let your ears play their part when you head for the lavatory tent in the middle of the night, bring a flashlight with you, and never assume that because you were someplace yesterday and it was free of animals, it will apply a day or even hours later.' We'd gather in groups of three or four during the day, and go off in a jeep to find hyenas and record what we saw. Dr. Frank wanted something like 'Cub No. 22 walked twelve metres toward its mother, who picked the cub up in her mouth by the nape of its neck,' and not 'A darling cub ran over and nestled up to its adorable mother.'

"I've been on six Earthwatches. Two were bird trips—one to Panama to find the great black-and-white owl and the oropendola, which has a sharp, crowlike beak and looks like a big oriole, and the other to study cranes in the marsh country up near the Chinese-Mongolian border. In China, there


The air is clean, the food is nutritious, and we've got inflation licked—we can go on like this forever!

THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

• •

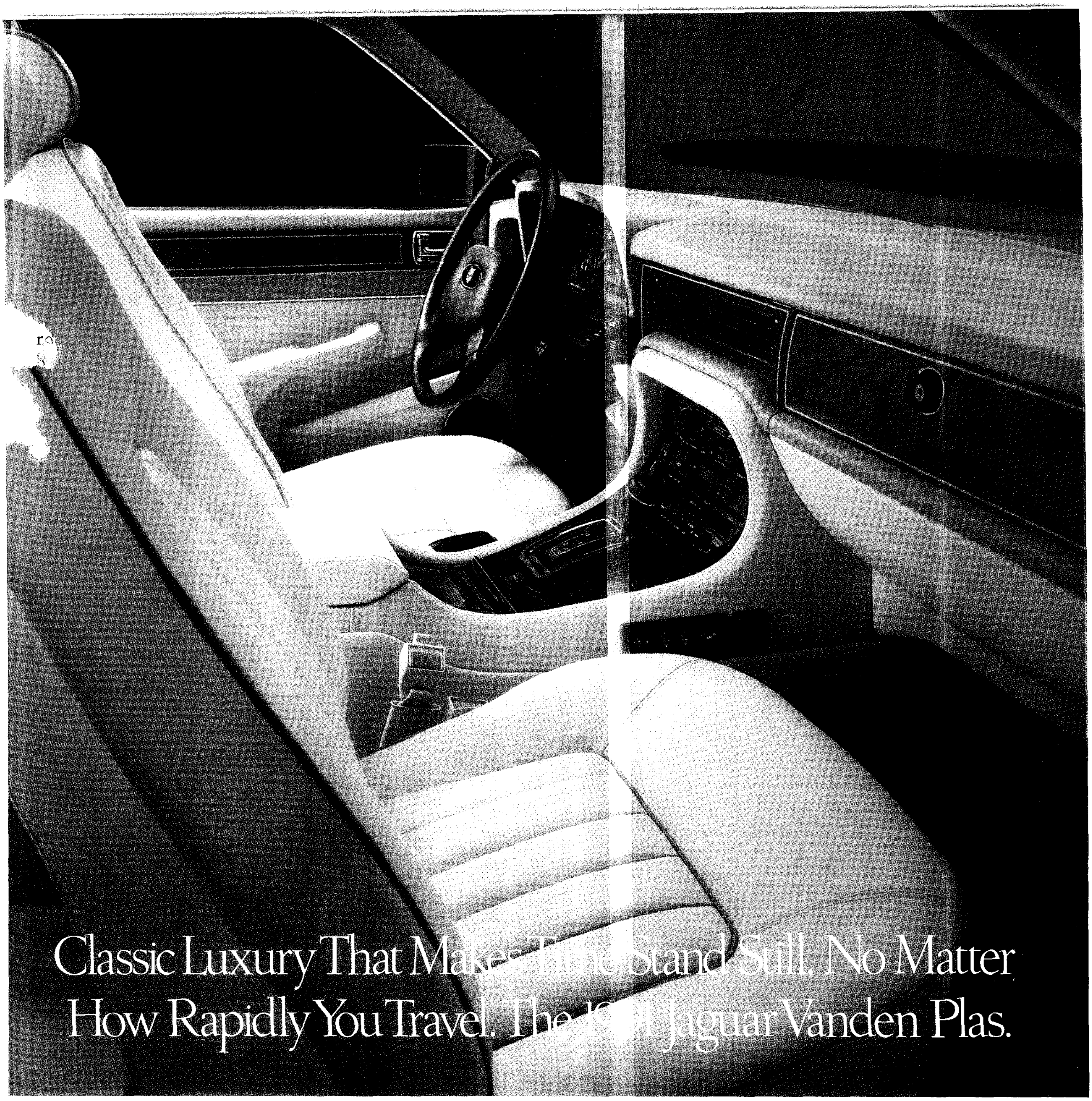
were red-cheeked, lusty, loud people who kept pigs in their front yards, and there were visiting Chinese professors housed in miserable barracks. Captive cranes, five feet tall, were used to attract wild cranes, and the captive cranes lived better than the professors. And I've made two trips to Madagascar with the zoologist Alison Jolly to study ring-tailed lemurs." Daphne wrote an account of her second Madagascar trip for the Bernardsville *News*, which covers the area in New Jersey where she grew up. Parts of it are extremely vivid and are written in a kind of Gilbert White prose:

> We spent several hours along the rainy rain forest paths, admiring ferns and listening to clear parrot whistles. At last four indri appeared in a clearing, tail-less large grey and white lemurs. They ate leaves thoughtfully from thin trees; then with mighty leaps advanced into the forest where they disappeared.
>
> We drove along several noisy metal bridges, past Amboasary village with its Sunday cattle market, over the Mandrare River into dry country, and continued on a long straight road through sisal plantations to the tin-roofed cement building of the Reserve. A dancing band greeted us with fierce lunging and stamping. A guard wearing a pointed little straw Antandroy hat and whistle in his mouth led the gang. He recognized me from the Earthwatchers; he embraced me warmly and invited me to prance off with the band.

An accompanying photograph in the paper shows Daphne laughing and dancing arm in arm with the guard, who is brandishing a spear in his right hand.

Daphne played at the Village Gate that evening with her trio. They were set up in the Terrace Bar, which stretches along the front of the Gate on the ground floor. It is a noisy, uncaring place, full of drop-ins and the curious. People talk a lot, and when the music gets in their way they talk louder. Daphne was on a low dais at the east end of the room, with Eddie Berg to her right and Lyn Christie just behind her. During a single, hour-long set, they played ten numbers, among them two Berg originals entitled "Strange" and "Escapade," an Oscar Pettiford blues, "Honeysuckle Rose," "Misty," and Sonny Rollins' "Doxy." The group has built an impressive repertory. It includes discreetly jazzed-up versions of Bach and Scarlatti and Respighi; such country-and-Western numbers as "King of the Road," "Tennessee Waltz," and "Foggy Mountain Breakdown"; ragtime pieces like the "Pineapple Rag," the "Black and White Rag," and "The Entertainer"; and jazz numbers like "Watermelon Man," "Ballin' the Jack," "Summertime," and "Tea for Two." It is a comfortable, nicely balanced group that swings from the inside and has a pleasant, see-through texture. Daphne's pearly treble figures are offset by Christie's bass, and Berg moves easily between. He is the motor of the group. A fleet admirer of Johnny Smith and Charlie Christian and Django Reinhardt, he is little known in the jazz world and prefers to keep it that way. Daphne plays with regal animation, and when she moves into a difficult ensemble passage or takes a brief improvised solo her jaw muscles flicker. She occasionally hesitates rhythmically, but Berg picks her up, and off they go again.

After the set, Daphne sat at a table and talked. "I think of myself as Miss Harp. I take almost any job that comes along. If I could, I'd work every day. When I don't have a gig, I walk over to Kitty O'Shea's and play there. I like harp playing to be an extension of talking, and I don't like it when I get stuck in a corner or off on a balcony. I do Grand Central and Penn Station and the subway so I can talk to people. I'm partly a manic-depressive, and some days are awful, particularly when I'm tired and haven't had my quota of little naps. But playing lifts me right up and makes me feel good again. So does dancing. I love to dance, and for a time I was a greeter at the Tunnel. I've also worked as a cashier in the five-and-ten. I took the job to see if I was employable, and I was thrilled when I wasn't fired." —Whitney Balliett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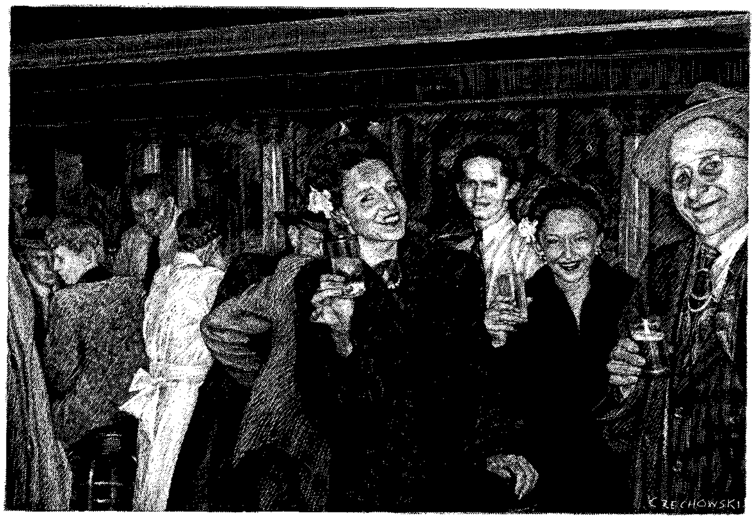
# ANNALS OF PLACE

## GEORGE & EDDIE'S



IN 1942, Eddie Wenzek went off to the part of the war they were holding in Ithaca, New York. On Christmas Eve of that year, his train home, the train to Buffalo's New York Central Terminal, was among the last of the trains to depart from the Ithaca station. "White Christmas," Bing Crosby's new hit that season, was being played over and over on the public-address system in the background as the other recruits from the Navy's Civilian Pilot Training—like Eddie, wearing stout green Civilian Conservation Corps uniforms left over from the Depression—hauled their duffels into railroad passenger cars and steamed off through New York state. Waiting for the Buffalo train, Eddie was left standing almost alone on the platform, so lost in Irving Berlin's melody that always afterward it reminded him of Ithaca. The next morning, he celebrated Christmas above the family tavern, at 722 Sycamore Street, on Buffalo's East Side, with his parents and sisters, who had said novenas for him ever since August, when he enlisted in the Navy. Theirs was not the easy secularity one heard in Bing Crosby's voice but a stricter faith. They prayed Eddie right out of combat.

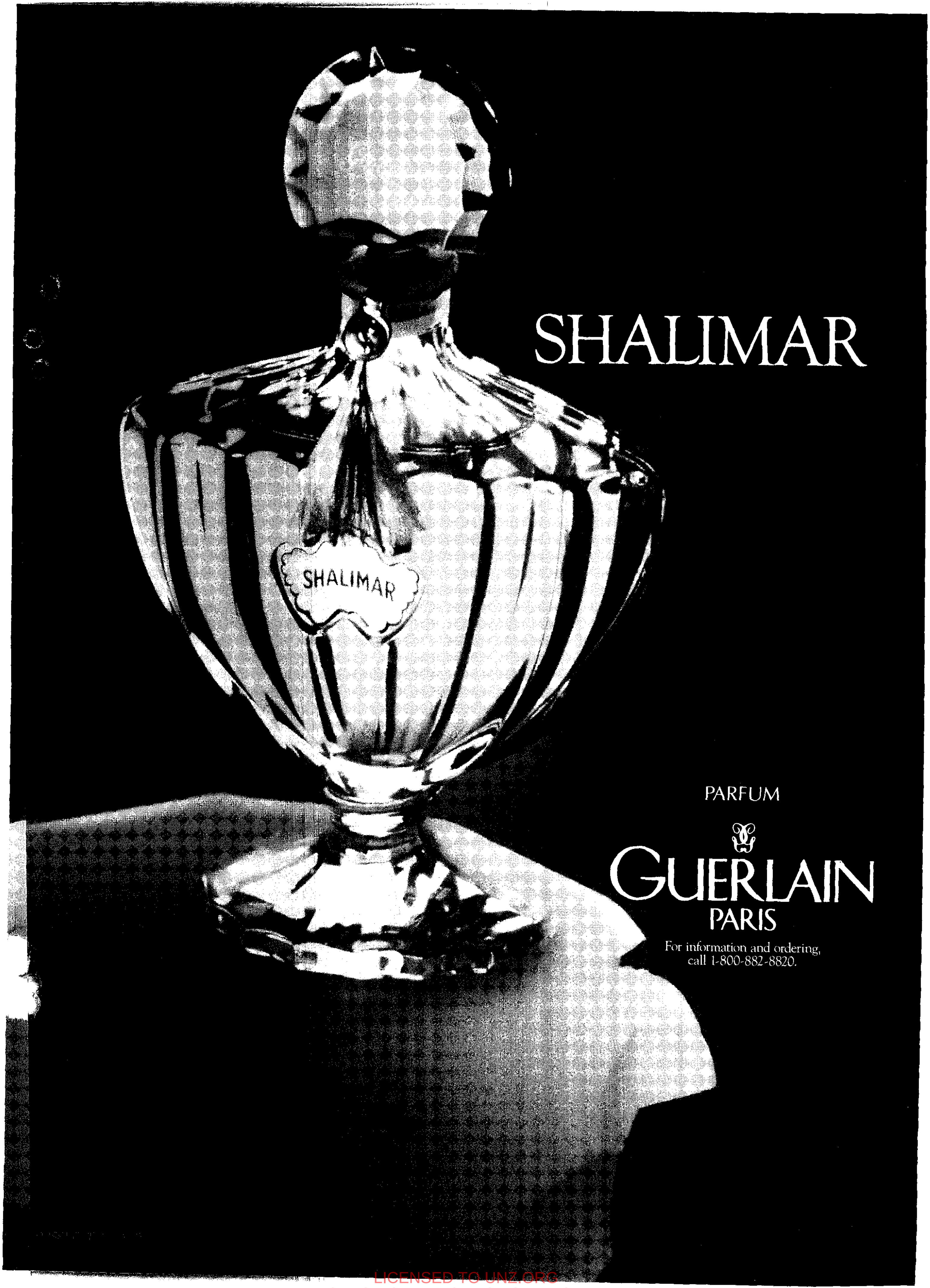
For a few months, it looked as though Eddie might find himself, as he hoped, in the cockpit of a Navy fighter, flying missions from an aircraft carrier or from an island airstrip somewhere in the South Pacific. At Cornell, he and his new friends learned to fly Piper Cubs. They attended flight school at Colgate University and at the University of North Carolina, at Chapel Hill. In Primary Training, flying a sturdy biplane called an N3N, Eddie failed a check flight, a test of fighter-pilot skills. He landed safely, but when he got back to the hangar he saw that the arrow determining his future as a Navy pilot pointed downward. So Eddie transferred to the Army Air Forces.

The Army sent Eddie to Miami, then to Laredo, and there he found himself in gunnery school, with no further prospect of flight training. He spent weeks shooting clay birds out of the Webb County thermals with a twelve-gauge shotgun. The trainees aimed at each other's pigeons in frustration. No one wanted to be a gunner. When pilots needing flight time turned up at the base, gunnery students flew south with them, firing bursts from their twin fifty-calibre machine guns at Mexican ground targets. In August, 1945, when the war ended, Eddie was stationed at La Junta, in the dry grasslands of southeastern Colorado. The Army asked him to join the occupation forces in Europe. "Forget it," Eddie said. "I gotta go tend bar." He was back on Sycamore Street in December.

There were not many souvenirs from Eddie's unusual war—a flight certification, menus from nights out on leave, snapshots taken beside a Piper Cub, studio proofs of Eddie in uniform. Wearing double-breasted dress blues, an anchor emblazoned above the glossy bill of his white Navy hat, a single star on his coat sleeve, Eddie appears almost lost in his uniform. He smiles without a touch of hardness or militancy. His is the self-respecting, equanimous gaze of a man who considers the highest earthly rank to be that of civilian. On the night when Thomas Wenzek, Eddie's father, threw the bash he had promised four years before—a welcome-home party for neighborhood G.I.s—Eddie took his proper place: beside his dad, behind the bar of the Thomas Wenzek Restaurant.

Insurance atlases of the period—immense bound volumes that plot the distribution of indemnity and risk—record 722 Sycamore Street, where the Wenzek family lived, in the back apartment above the Thomas Wenzek Restaurant, as a two-and-a-half-story frame building on a corner lot thirty-six feet wide and a hundred and six feet deep. For the East Side of Buffalo in 1947 such atlases seem to have whole chapters of two-and-a-half-story frame buildings, all rendered in outline from a simulated aerial view. But the atlases do not record the presence of large, graceful elms in East Buffalo, or the way the streets were edged with square stone curbs, whose cutting and laying were the fiefdom of a potent Italian union. They do not mention the bricks that ran between the streetcar tracks, or the rumble the bricks caused when trucks crossed them, or the slithering roar of the streetcars themselves. They say nothing about the markets and the parks and the dusty shopfronts. From the records it is impossible to learn that the acres of two-and-a-half-story frame houses on Buffalo's East Side had long since cohered into a Polish neighborhood, where each house was bound to the houses around it by an incalculable number of associations—associations that in many cases reached back past the Atlantic voyage, past the crowded North Sea docks, and into the partitioned Old Country itself.

Behind the rectory of St. John Kanty Church, on a side street off Broadway, East Buffalo's main thoroughfare, stands St. John Kanty Lyceum. Under the shallow-arched ceiling of its brick auditorium, a balcony lit by gallery windows circles a hardwood floor, where on odd nights during the year 1947 there might be a local big band at the head of the room, its brass choir popping out sixteenth notes, its saxo-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phone chorus pouring a sound like melted cheese over the dancers. At the opening bars of "Rose Room" or "That's My Desire," the floor closes with couples. Before long, there will be an interlude of Polish tunes ("How Quickly Moments Flee"), and the elders will dance, too.

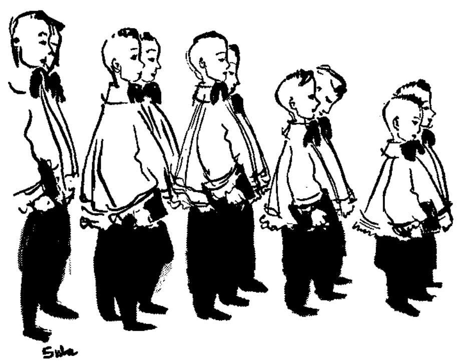
Eddie Wenzek passes from table to table, not a hair out of place on his head. Around him lies a neighborhood reconstituted. Men tip back on wooden folding chairs, talking around their wives, who have about them an attitude of confidential display meant more for bureau mirrors than for husbands. Their restrained makeup is the facial equivalent of a thoroughly scrubbed house. The men have dressed in dark suits, the better to set off the women, in their best floral prints. All concede the highest levels of ornamentation to their female children, about whose display there is no confidentiality whatever.

"Eddie! Have a drink! You know my wife! Meet my daughter! Meet the other daughter! Meet my niece!" one imagines them saying, for Eddie is a catch. And who (but a priest) surpasses a young bartender, the son of an old bartender, at providing the conversation required of such a moment? At each table, it is ultimately dance or drink, and sometimes Eddie dances, sometimes he drinks. When he accepts a cocktail, it is with a manner suggesting that a Manhattan-on-the-rocks turns to V-8 juice on the trip down his alimentary canal. And when Eddie dances it is with a flourish that comes from years of practice with his younger sister and regular partner, Florie. They dance at home, in the living room of the back apartment above the bar; in downtown clubs; and aboard the Canadiana, a Lake Erie liner that sails nightly on a sixty-cent round trip from the Buffalo waterfront to the ballroom at Crystal Beach, in southern Ontario—the most elegant and entertaining amusement park between the Welland Canal and the Niagara River. As soon as the Canadiana casts off lines from its pier on Commercial Street, the slot machines begin to clatter. The thrum of the liner's dance floor (caused by engines under power) provides a steady bass to the ten-piece Harold Austin Orchestra and the vocal embellishments of Tiny Schwarz, the Canadiana's singer, who sells Chevrolets during the day and stars weekend nights with Dick Lecksell's orchestra at the Auf Wiedersehen.

Eddie is so light-boned that he makes his partners feel light-boned, too, moving across the floor of St. John Kanty Lyceum under the appreciative gaze of elders who have long since sized him up; they are patrons of his father's tavern, after all. They appraise Eddie for the pure pleasure of appraisal: he reminds them that in 1947 not everything has gone to the dogs. What few flaws he has—he speaks no Polish, he has lost the Old World customs—are minor compared with his promise, which is the promise so dear to so many Polish-American hearts: property, filial respect, a cash business. They look at Eddie and they see the canary-colored walls of 722 Sycamore Street rising out of the earth at a good business corner on a major street. What is now the Thomas Wenzek Restaurant will this very year, 1947, pass into Eddie's hands, with plenty of room upstairs for his own family (when he chooses to marry) and for his parents, Thomas and Freda. Eddie Wenzek dancing with one's daughter is a happy sight.

It is a fine summer night. As the evening ends, Eddie hears the Polish spoken on the portico of St. John Kanty, but to bid him goodnight its speakers switch to broad American, the tongue of Walt Disney and of Al Capone, who died in retirement at Miami Beach in January, reminding everyone how long ago the twenties and the thirties were. Even the war, which once seemed as though it would never end, now feels astonishingly distant.

The milk-glass bulbs of the street lamps, mounted on shapely iron posts, cast a pavement-level shine down Broadway. Neon script brightens some of the bar and restaurant windows, but most display only hand-lettered signs. Above the smaller shops sleep their keepers. Each façade is cut in two horizontally. The upper stories are drab: a trio or quartet of windows set in brick or clapboard or shingles. From time to time, a gap between the buildings reveals an outer staircase leading to a rear apartment, where work boots line the welcome mat. In the lower-story windows is a babel of entreaty. In every shopfront, cardboard-mounted faces smile from advertisements, with pipes, cigarettes, beers, soap powders held on high. In that world, "Candy Is Delicious Food (Enjoy Some Every Day!)" and "Pork Sausage Your Best Food Buy." A Mail-Pouch Tobacco thermometer hangs beside a screen door. An empty Buffalo *Courier-Express* rack leans against [illegible] sill.



Eddie knows by heart the contents of the darkened stores he passes walking home. In any one of them, a space heater squats between the aisles, vented through a whitewashed pressed-tin ceiling. Low glass cases have pyramids of cans and a balance scale on top. There is cornbread mix on the meat counter, under which purple sausages and wax-papered lard are displayed. On the back wall hangs a calendar from Walter Zoladz Lumber, Builders' Supply & Fuel Corporation, advertising coal and coke. Wooden crates of fruit stand tipped at an angle, "Visit Mexico" printed on their sides. Near the cashbox cluster the last-second indispensables—the Hav-A-Hank handkerchiefs and the stick cologne. On a shelf behind the counter stands a porcelain Infant of Prague—like Eddie's own, a replica of a sixteenth-century wood-and-wax statue of the Christ Child King at Our Lady of Victory in Prague. His cheeks are the color of eggnog. His right hand is lifted in a pontifical blessing: the two raised fingers (each encircled with a gold band honoring a miraculous cure) signify Christ's double nature, man and God; the thumb and the last two fingers touch, to symbolize the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. In his left hand the Infant holds an orb with a cross on top. His naked feet protrude from beneath a velvet robe, which is carefully laundered and changed in accordance with the colors of the liturgical year, and a new robe is bought from time to time from the Catholic Union Store at Main and Virginia or sewn at home.

Eddie turns up a quiet block toward Sycamore Street. After Broadway, the

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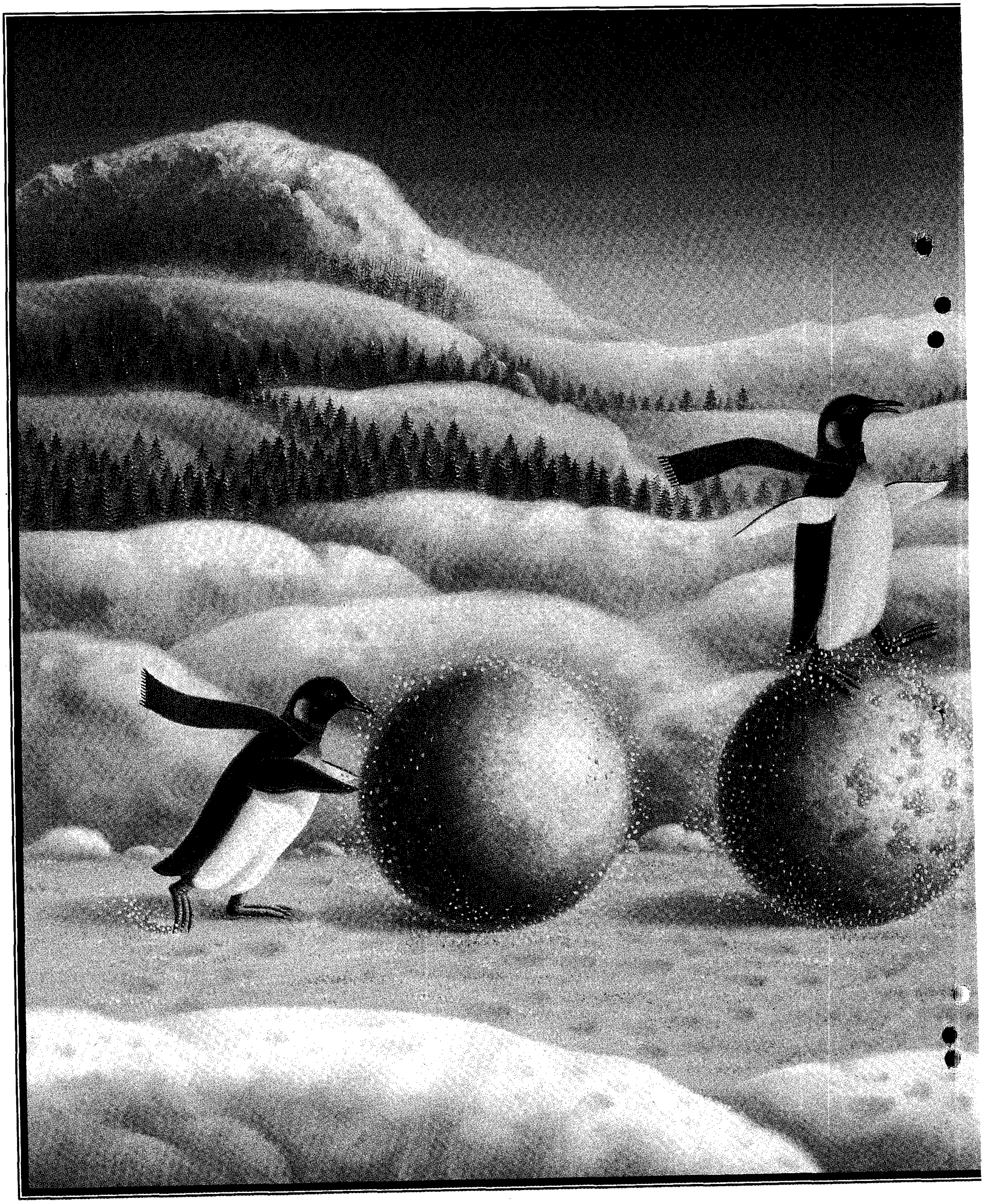
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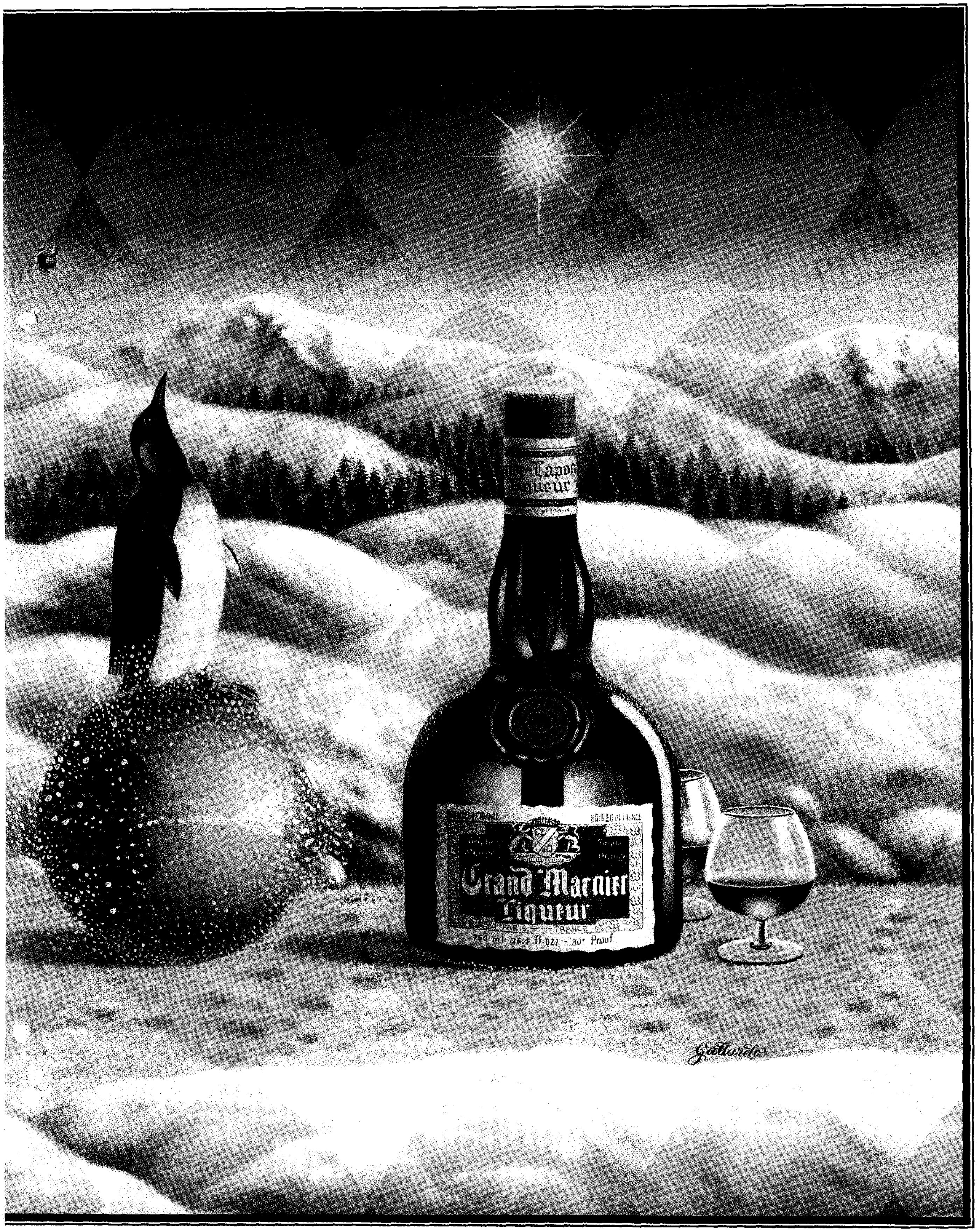
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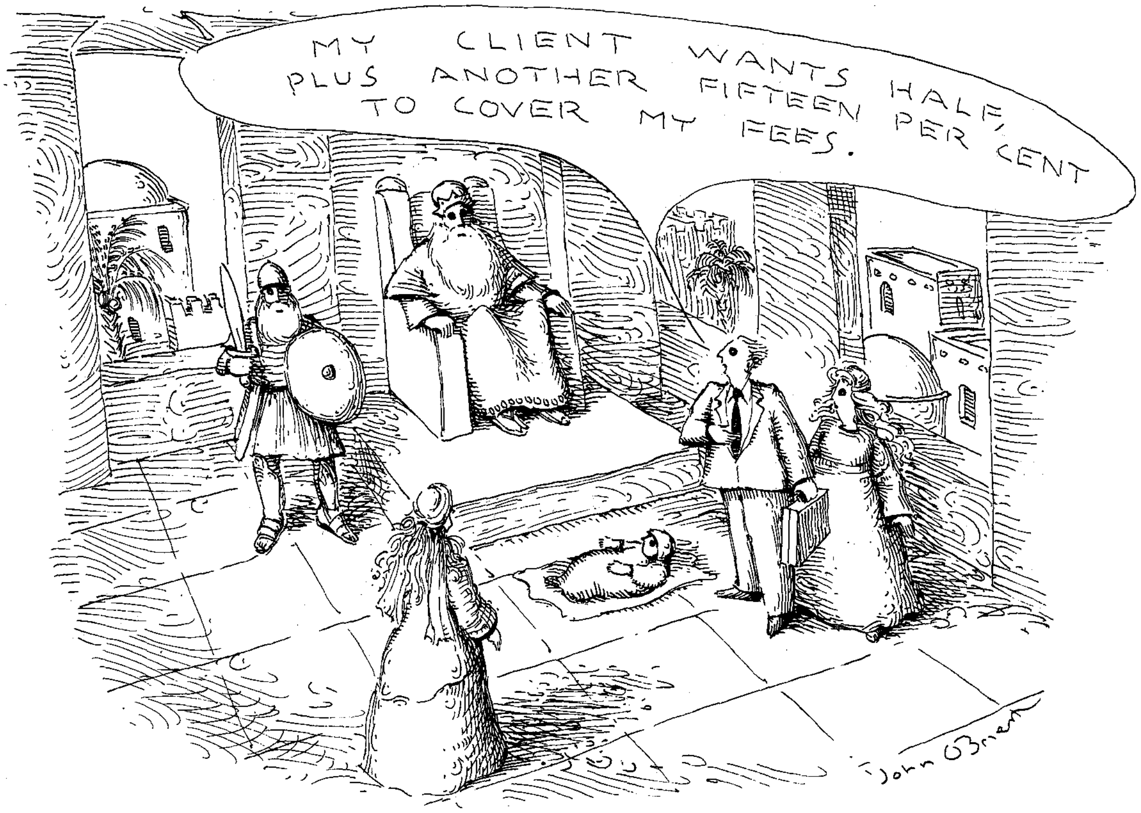

MY CLIENT WANTS HALF, PLUS ANOTHER FIFTEEN PER CENT TO COVER MY FEES.

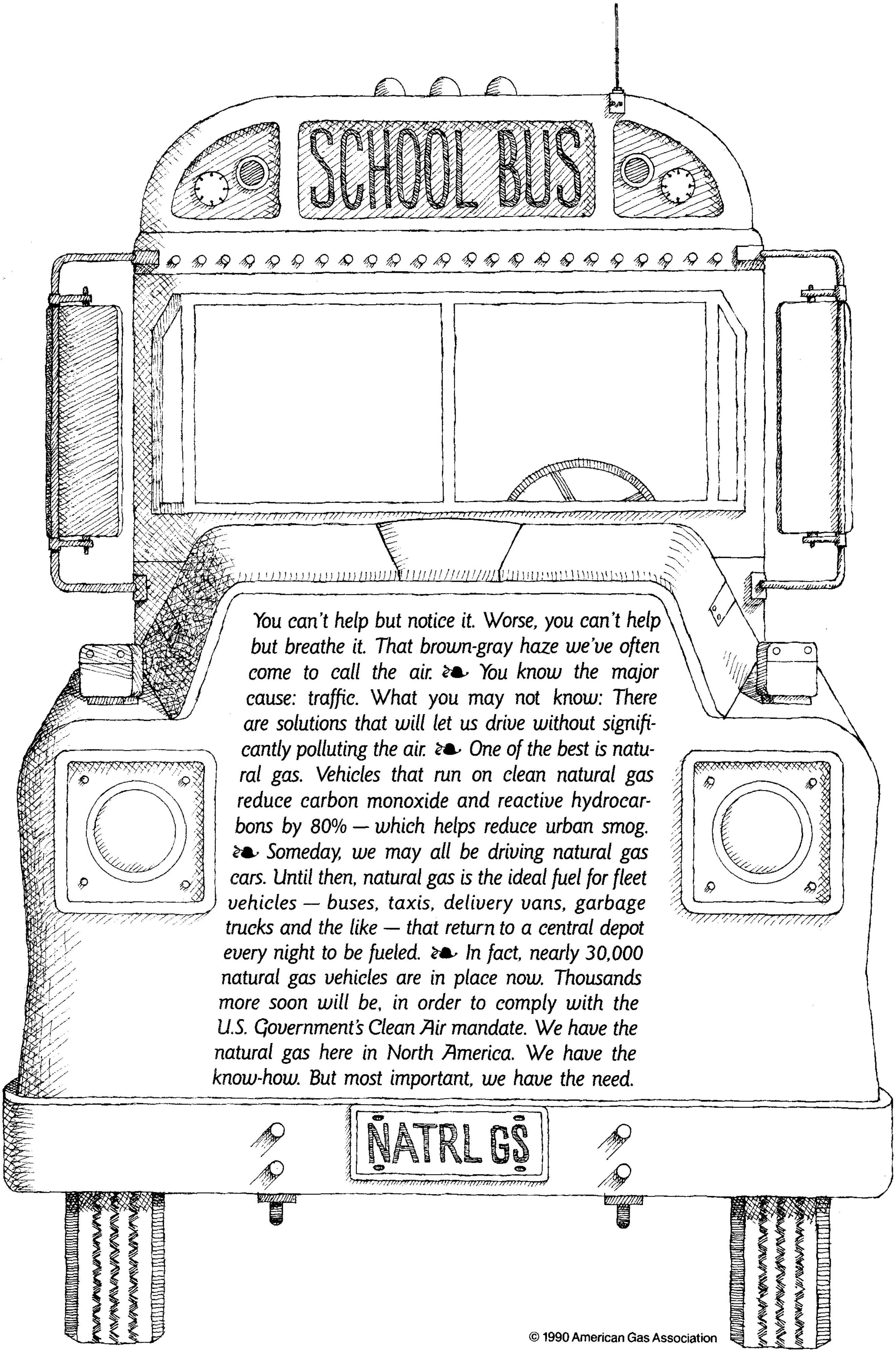
darkness is palpable, as it always seems to be at night on the residential streets of Buffalo. Walking past these rows of close-set houses, Eddie is just slightly out of his element: he has never lived in a private house—one without a public room where liquor is sold. Most of his friends and relatives, though, do live in houses like these, three times as long as they are wide. "Telescopes" they call them, for their collapsible appearance—for the way the high-peaked, two-and-a-half-story frame front gives onto a two-story addition, which is attached to a one-story kitchen, which expires in a woodshed or a toolshed, one side of it edged by raspberries and rhubarb. Each addition represents a generation that has been housed within.

Eddie turns onto Sycamore Street a couple of blocks east of the bar, where the solid run of houses is broken by corner stores and gas stations. The pavement is wider here to make room for the No. 6 streetcar, which runs straight downtown and on past the city line, where Cheektowaga starts. This is a street of people who are thoroughly real in Eddie's mind. These people are foundry workers and general laborers. They run radio-repair shops and liquor stores and delicatessens. They work for the railroad and the automakers and the steel mills and the school system and the city. They jam, jelly, pickle, cook, and can. They wash, iron, and sweep. They are tailors and sales clerks and sheet-metal workers, dentists, barbers, butchers, plasterers, roofers, and masons. They finger rosaries, and they drink at the Thomas Wenzek Restaurant, or they frequent one of the other corner bars in this neighborhood where two out of four corners of every intersection are bars built on land that was once owned by breweries. When these people drink too much, they wander quietly home, though one or two of them grow foul-mouthed and are ejected from places like 722 Sycamore Street. The neighborhood names are Chlebowy, Switula, Oleksiak, Kuzniarck, Weclowski, Zajak, Kiffman, Augustyniak, Kuberacka, Wojtowicz, Kudlinski, Grez, Zimmicki, Cylulski, Grimm, Hoffman, Grochowiak, Kapankiewicz, Koczur, Wolf, Skalska, Naumann, Lalewicz, Siffling, Nowak, Zadrodnik, Munella, Janowski, Buczkowski, Mayer, Stephan, Isenberg, Urbanski, Bojanowski, Ott.

And Wenzek. That name is painted on the front windows of the yellow building on the northwest corner down the street—one that fills its lot completely, leaving room for only a narrow hedge on one long side and, on the other, a tiny rose garden. An angled entrance cuts off one corner of the façade; leaded-glass lozenges parade above the red awning that shades the front window. The homes on Sycamore withdraw from the street, but the Thomas Wenzek Restaurant squares right up to the traffic—a gin mill on an asphalt river.

With his partner and brother-in-law, George Ditzel, Eddie plans to bring 722 Sycamore Street up to 1947 standards—to redo the kitchen, the lighting, the menu, and the mood. He wants to keep a family atmosphere at lunch and dinner and on Sundays but to make it feel *postwar*—less an old-fashioned workingman's bar, of the sort his father created, and more a fashionable late-night spot. He wants to pull in the people who dine downtown at the Statler Hotel or the Park Lane Restaurant, those who listen to Lena Horne at the Town Casino or take in Tex Beneke and the Glenn Miller Orchestra ("35 Ex-Service Men") at Shea's Buffalo, people who know cummerbunds from cucumbers and who have had their photos taken while eating at the Palmer House, in Chicago. That crowd will take some drawing.

The real work starts in August, when the fixtures of the old back bar will be torn out. Eddie will oversee the installation of: a new, eighteen-foot back bar, with a refrigerator; a liquor display that fits beneath the front of the bar, so that no bottles interrupt the beauty of the seventeen-foot marble-framed mirror; a cash-register recess; stainless-steel steps; a dry-storage area, for towels and aprons and napkins; a beer dispenser with five lines (four beer, one water); a compressor and blower coil connected to the precooler in the cold room in the basement (where half barrels of beer are stored and tapped);



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two stainless-steel work boards; four rinse bowls; swing faucets; two mixing stations; and eight metal legs, to keep the sinks and the work boards upright. That, plus a gallon of bar oil to buff the sheen on the mahogany front bar.

And one day, before long, Eddie will add a television set, the kind he saw in New York City when he was mustered out of the service: a United States Television Projection Set, Model T525L, list price $1,595. He will have a carpenter build a green leatherette console for it, raising it high in a corner of the bar, where everyone can see it. When WBEN starts broadcasting, in the spring of 1948, from the Statler Hotel, pointing a camera toward passersby on the street below, because it has no other programming, Eddie will be ready. He will be ready for the customers who want to watch the test pattern over a highball.

There is a loud rumble overhead. Clouds have piled invisibly into a thunderhead above Lake Erie and have drifted over Buffalo. The approaching storm holds just enough menace to gentle the sight of the bar, to soak it in welcomeness. Sunny afternoons, its business front looks stark and blanched, but in this scant illumination the bar becomes an alluring, secretive place, a haven. The sky brightens, lightning flickering momentarily. The street lamp at the corner of Sycamore and Herman dims and then flares. The bricks under the bar's front windows need scoring with acid to regain their natural beige. The building (again!) needs repainting. But what it needs most of all, as a token of this transition from one generation to the next, is a sign. Not the kind it has now, painted on the windows, but a fat and meaty sign—a tasteful burgundy, with blue neon sidelights and stylish white lettering. It would hang out over the sidewalk, pointing across the intersection. There would be no sign like it on the whole East Side. If it were guyed to the building, it would not swing in the wind. If it were lit just when day faded, you would not be able to tell whether it was the neon burning from within or the sun setting on Lake Erie, far down Sycamore Street, that made it glow. It would look beautiful in a late-night thunderstorm. "George & Eddie's," it would read. With a postscript: "Dining and Dancing." And a codicil: "French-Fried Shrimp."

The wind sounds like rain until the rain starts to fall, and then the two sound nothing alike. Eddie dashes for the front door and makes it just in time. The screen door squeezes shut behind him. Behind the bar stands a man with a corporal's stripe of a mustache beneath his nose. He is Thomas Wenzek. Around him rises his particular heaven —a two-and-a-half-story canary-colored frame house with a heated garage and a public bar.

In 1906, the year Thomas Wenzek came to America, there were no Poles, because there was no Poland; there were only Prussians, Russians, and Austrians who spoke Polish. But in the United States one is whatever one claims to be. Thomas Wenzek, born a Galician peasant, is a saloonkeeper, a Democrat, a euchre player, a Buick driver, and an ex-Austrian who will not talk about the Old World save to remark that in such a place and at such a time he rode a cow to school.

Everyone says Tom Wenzek's handshake will break your hand. The handshake fools no one. Tom Wenzek is a decent, well-liked man. The mustache —that brusque chevron under his nose —fools no one, either; it makes him appear meaner than he is. Looking at Tom Wenzek, you cannot imagine him a Galician peasant boy riding to school on a cow. His butch haircut comes to a V at the top of his head. He is tall, with immense arms. He wears rimless glasses and white shoes.

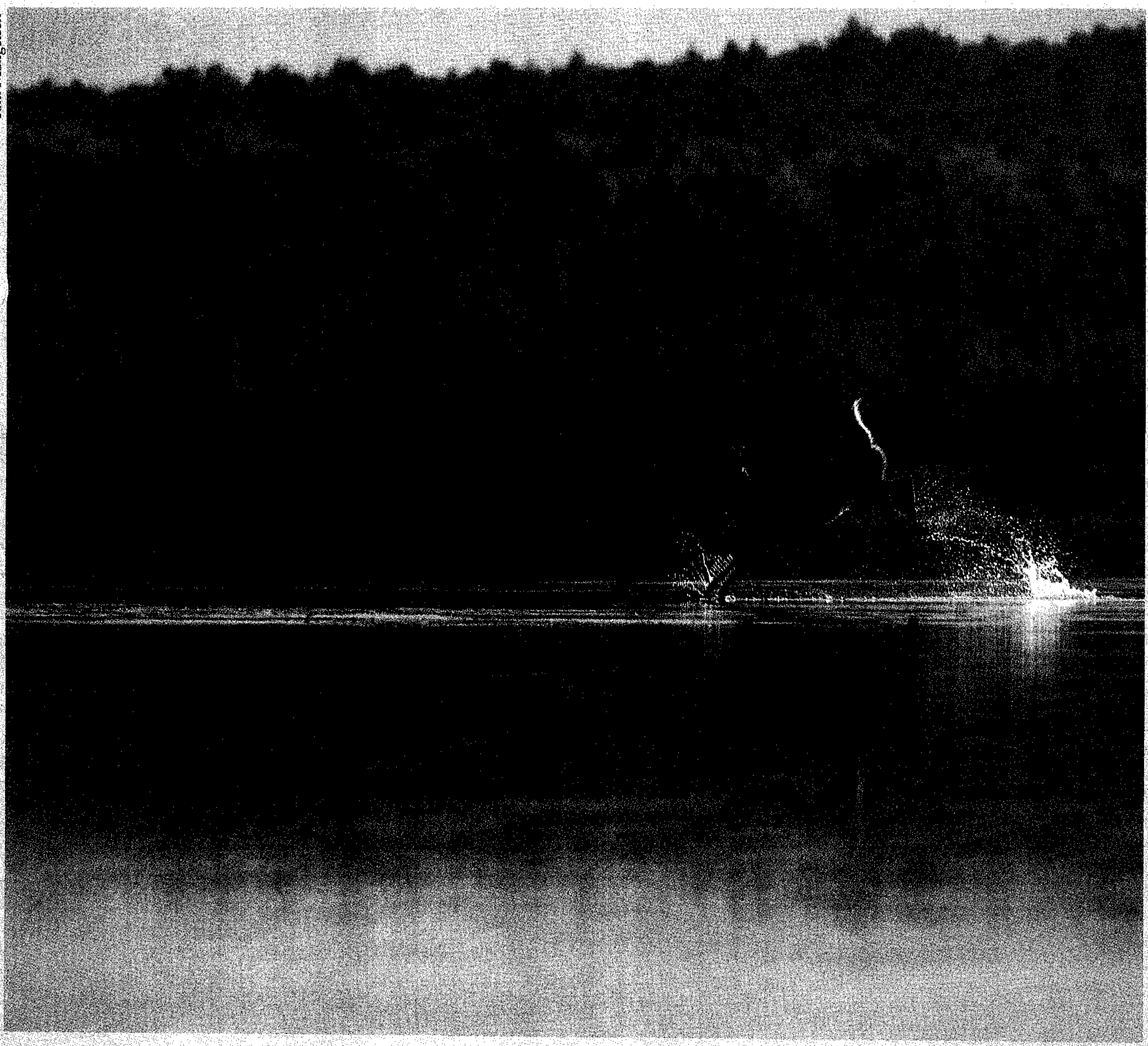
Between 1871 and 1913, eight hundred thousand people of Polish descent, among them Thomas Wenzek and his sister Julia, immigrated to the United States from Austria's largest province, Galicia. (Western Galicia is now just one region of Poland, the name itself a Latinized version of "Halicz," which was the name of the region when it was claimed by the Hapsburgs in 1772.) Eight hundred thousand Galician Poles in forty-three years does not sound like many until one considers that in 1910 Galicia's population was just over eight million and only slightly more than half was Polish, and until one considers the sheer weight of misery it must have taken to set such a mass in motion.

meg

Before 1918, when Poland was constituted as an autonomous republic in the aftermath of the First World War, Galicia was bordered on the west by Prussian Silesia, on the south by the portion of Austria-Hungary that later became Czechoslovakia, and on the north and east by Russia. Though much of Galicia was fertile farmland, the terrain in the southwest sharpened steadily to where the Tatra Mountains rose, their peaks ascending to almost nine thousand feet—the termination of Poland's great plain, and its only natural border besides the Baltic Sea. The Wenzek family came from the foothills of these mountains, just a mile and a half from the southernmost border of Galicia.

No one minces words about Galicia's economic condition at the beginning of the century. In "Our Slavic Fellow Citizens" (1910), the most sympathetic of many books prompted by the flood of Eastern European immigrants to the United States in the early twentieth century, Emily Greene Balch remarked of the Poles that "nowhere else do they find themselves in so bad an economic plight as in Galicia." A year later, the United States Congress's Immigration Commission issued a report called "Emigration Conditions in Europe." Throughout Austria-Hungary, the commission observed, "the peasant lives in a one-room hut without windows and with the earth only for a floor. The furnishings consist principally of an earthenware stove, beds, a chest, and a bench. Domestic animals wander in and out of the house at will." But in Galicia, it added, "conditions are perhaps more primitive than in other provinces." In Galicia, "the struggle for existence is severe."

During the nineteenth century, Galicia had the highest birthrate in Europe, its population increasing by two hundred and sixteen per cent. According to a 1900 report, seventy-seven per cent of Galicia's residents farmed or were somehow engaged in agriculture



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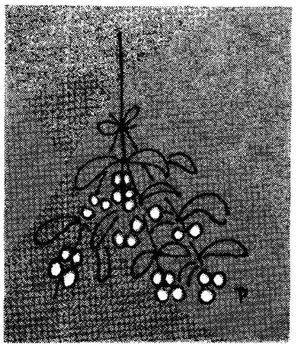
or forestry. By 1910, even as immigration thinned the numbers, the population density in western Galicia, where Thomas Wenzek grew up, reached three hundred people per square mile, most of them "agriculturlists." That was an *average* of three hundred people on the six hundred and forty acres in a square mile. In the major farming belts of the United States, a density of less than a tenth that was normal.



Serfdom in Galicia had been abolished in 1848, just forty years before Thomas Wenzek was born. It took twenty years more—until the late eighteen-sixties—to establish the peasants' privilege to subdivide the land they came to own. As Galicia's population swelled and each family passed on to its children some parcel of land as inheritance or dowry, the arable surface grew more and more fragmented, the fields tinier and tinier. "A peasant's holding is not contiguous territory like an American farmer's, but is divided into strips of land often widely separated and some distance from the town," the Immigration Commission reported. Emily Greene Balch reported, "Of all the agricultural properties in the country, nearly 80 per cent are 'small' (that is, under twelve and a half acres), and nearly half consist of less than five acres." If one had a large family—and most farmers, Catholic or not, tried to raise large families, just as they tried to raise large crops—an "agricultural property" of five acres, not all of it fertile, supported only rudimentary life. Hope in Galicia was scant enough to drive men and women who had always lived on the land, parcelled and patchworked as it was, to make their way by rail to the North Sea ports of Bremen, Bremerhaven, and Hamburg and thence to the inner cities of industrial America, as far from the land as it was possible for them to go.

Galician Poles like Tom Wenzek, who was eighteen when he arrived, in 1906, entered New York Harbor with distended imaginations and a temporary, fearsome capacity—itself a kind of capital—for seeing the United States from scratch. When they pulled into Buffalo's Exchange Street Station on the New York Central line, they were further amazed to find that New York City was not the lone concentration of this country's wealth. In some ways, Buffalo was even more astonishing than New York, because in Buffalo they began to learn in earnest the details of the enterprise that would absorb them, and which they had only blinked at in New York. "Buffalo's large Polish and Italian population furnishes a plentiful supply of labor," the city told prospective manufacturers. According to industrialists of the time, Buffalo's concentration of immigrants was one of the things—another was the Niagara River—that made it a logical place to develop industries, and especially ones that used "labor not requiring long apprenticeship or a high degree of skill."

Before the new Polish immigrants joined the employment lines outside Buffalo's steel mills and rail yards and packing plants—the sources of the city's economic boom—they barely had time to look about them. When they did look, they found themselves in a ghetto where, according to the Immigration Commission's 1911 report on conditions in East Buffalo, "the houses are without improvements; the water supply is sometimes shared by two or three households, all of which use a yard faucet; the toilets are in the yard, and in a few instances there is surface drainage." It was a district in which "good housekeeping should be regarded as distinctly an achievement." What relief the new immigrants felt came from the knowledge that this was better than Galicia and from the discovery that many thousands of their kind had clustered in the streets of East Buffalo. It was a free country, however bound one's memories might be. There were Poles here who were neither Russians nor Austrians nor Germans but, for the first time, Poles true and proper—at least, until they began to feel more American than Polish.

But Buffalo! Its bustle during the years of peak Polish immigration, just before and after the turn of the century, made anything less than braggadocio seem like sullen irony. For an immigrant from a backward province of Austria-Hungary it took a while to get used to the American notion of progress, which blew like an invigorating breeze off the Great Lakes and over the once glaciated flats of Erie County. True Buffalonians, true Americans all, saw signs of advance wherever they turned their gaze. "Marked scientific progress in Buffalo: 27 superfluous curs killed by electricity," a pictorial yearbook announced in 1888, the year Tom Wenzek was born in Austria-Hungary. County Superintendents of the Poor of New York state convened downtown, and so did annual meetings of the National Stove-Lining Association, the United Typothetae of America, the American Electro-Therapeutic Association, the Roentgen Ray Society of the United States, and the State Barbers' Association.

The city broke down into delivery districts, and the day was divided into delivery schedules. No one knew them all. Two hundred and fifty-three passenger trains a day steamed into Buffalo's five terminals. A hundred acres of the city were given over to pens full of livestock milling in the awkward interval before slaughter. (As a rail center and meat-packing town, Buffalo was second only to Chicago.) The city, once a stop on the Underground Railroad, was progressively outspoken in its charities and services in 1906. It chronicled death by overcrowding, cholera, starvation, tuberculosis, and typhoid in the East Buffalo neighborhoods of the foreign-born and indexed "defective" and "backward" children there. It authorized the establishment of the Buffalo State Asylum for the Insane, the Erie County Poor House, and an Old Ladies' Home, and also orphanages of every denomination. Over Buffalo's sidewalks loomed proud Victorian buildings—the County Hall, the Post Office, the German Insurance Company. Its stateliest cemetery, Forest Lawn, had been dubbed "one of the loveliest burial places between Brooklyn and Chicago."

In 1825, when the Erie Canal reached its western terminus, on Lake Erie, Buffalo had numbered twenty-four hundred and twelve residents, in a modest settlement of frame buildings surrounded by sycamore stumps, their trunks gone for timber or fuel. The canal turned Buffalo, which had barely survived its burning by the British in the War of 1812, into a jumping-off point—"the most Eastern West," Captain Willard Glazier called it in 1885, in his book "Peculiarities of American Cities." For a time, Buffalo, like the jumping-off points that replaced it as the country expanded westward, was the setting for unbelievable frenzy. A prominent Buffalonian wrote in 1864, "I was here in the autumn of 1835, and one morning I was at the dock, with many other strangers, gazing upon the mighty heaving western tide. There was a pile of goods and furniture all along on Joy & Webster's wharf, more than twenty feet high, and upon the top of it sat as many as a dozen Senecas, men and women; they too, with the rest of us, gazing with astonishment at this sudden flood of life sweeping over them, coming they knew not whence, and going they knew not whither."

That "sudden flood of life" bore settlers from the Erie Canal to the near frontier—to Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois. Flooding back in their place came lumber, grain, livestock, and ores, which Buffalo processed and transshipped—at first down the canal and, as that became outmoded, along the railroad ties that soon fretted the banks of the Buffalo River. "Supply from the West and demand from the East"—that was the meaning of Buffalo's position at the eastern end of the Great Lakes. "Within a night's ride of Buffalo," the city claimed as late as 1920, "live more than half of this country's population."

Buffalo was blessed by its geographical position in other ways as well. The proximity of Niagara Falls meant that there could be no end to the city's growth. ("I wouldn't give the Americans more than ten years before they build a sawmill or a flour mill at the foot of the cataract," Tocqueville wrote in 1831.) In 1844, addressing a crowd in Rochester, New York (seventy miles east of Buffalo but well within reach of Niagara's influence), Daniel Webster said, "If the Thames had a fall of two hundred and fifty feet within the limits of London, London would not be a town, it would be the whole world." Millard Fillmore, one of two United States Presidents to come from Buffalo (the other was Grover Cleveland), told the assembled members of the Buffalo Board of Trade, "Buffalo in the progress of history is destined by its position to be what Alexandria and Venice were." In that single sentence all the elements of a local creed appear.

By canal barge or by rail, Buffalo was inescapable in the late nineteenth

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century. Astonishment vied with civic pride as the city boomed and boomed again. There is no forge of rhetoric like a sense of destiny, and in Buffalo civic oratory swelled even faster than the city itself. "There are as many miles of asphalt pavement in Buffalo as in all the cities of Europe," an 1895 article proclaimed, and an 1883 civic brochure announced, "The City of Buffalo has all the favorable conditions for health, longevity and mental and physical vigor that can be desired, unequalled by any city in the United States." Delaware Avenue, said A. Conger Goodyear, a pillar of Buffalo society, is "the champion residential street of the United States." Even the rhetoric of sober biographers fell under the spell of Buffalo's "rough, elemental vigor." Allan Nevins wrote in his life of Grover Cleveland, "Buffalo was one of the knots that the Spirit of Commerce had tied in her flashing loom to help fix her American pattern."

By the time Thomas Wenzek arrived, Buffalo was the eighth-largest city in the nation and its fourth-largest port—"America's Gateway to and from the Great North West." Down at the dock—channelled and dredged and lined with rail sidings and grain elevators—harbor pilots maneuvered Great Lakes freighters carrying grain and lumber and iron ore past the breakwater. Along the winding paths of Delaware Park, laid out by Frederick Law Olmsted in the late eighteen-seventies, tribes of children played under the watchful eyes of nurses and of well-born mothers or gathered to look at the prairie dogs in the zoological garden. Stately homes receded to the north and west. In council chambers, city fathers murmured in earnestness, smoke from their cigars drifting through open windows and out over Niagara Square, from which the streets of the city radiated like rays from the setting sun.

From the fashionable boulevards of Buffalo, the East Side looked like a foreign country. Mabel Dodge Luhan, an acquaintance of A. Conger Goodyear (whom, she said, she "always called The Grouch"), wrote in "Intimate Memories," "Sometimes, very seldom, we tried to go over to the East Side and see what that was like . . . Our instinctive feeling towards the East Side was one of contempt that had something inimical in it." There was also something of fear and fascination in it, for "it was the custom for hard-faced men unknown to us all to come over from the East Side . . . and drive fast-trotting horses up and down [Delaware] Avenue."

Above the glinting rails and the dull earth to the east, beside the dingy low buildings of the city's rail yards and stockyards and along those streets filled with hard-faced men, rose sandstone and brick churches erected by East Side Catholics as their refuge from labor—St. Stanislaus, St. Adalbert, Transfiguration, St. Mary of Sorrows, Corpus Christi. Among the flat-roofed buildings off to the south and west of the rail yards ran a network of interlinked tracks. Between them lay the vast ponds, glittering in every weather, that supplied the packing plants with ice. Looming next to the ponds were the Jacob Dold Packing Company and the Crocker Fertilizer & Chemical Works, makers of Buffalo Queen City phosphate and also of specialty phosphates for growers of potatoes, hops, tobacco, and other crops. Nearby stood the Christian Klinck Packing Company, the New England Dressed Meat & Wool Company, and the Danahy Meat Packing Plant, which was the manufacturer of Easter Brand hams, Queen City smoked meats, and Snow Flake lard. To the southwest lay the brick stacks of the steel mills along the lake and the elevators along the Buffalo River and, nearer, the Larkin Soap Company, a huge complex in whose shadow lay dozens of lesser enterprises: tanneries, harness-makers, acid factories—all of them flourishing near the stockyards.

From the mid-nineteenth century on, East Buffalo's William Street was edged with stockmen's hotels—the Brainard House, the Voss House, the Stock Exchange Hotel, and, greatest of them all, the Crandall House, which was equipped with a one-third-mile track for the empirical testing of horses under wager, and was the first hotel in Buffalo to offer telephone and telegraph service to its patrons. Farther east on William, open pigpens lined the street. Extensive barns and sheds and chutes rambled southward toward the railroad tracks, where trains packed solid with cattle and hogs for twenty-eight hours since their last outing were unloaded, the footing rank with manure, the hog cars dripping in hot

# A CHRISTMAS SONG

Christmas is coming, the geese are getting fat,
Please to put a penny in the old man's hat;
If you haven't got a penny, a ha'penny will do,
If you haven't got a ha'penny, God bless you!

Tonight the wide, wet flakes of snow
Drift down like Christmas suicides,
Layering the eaves and boughs until
The landscape seems transformed, as from
A night of talk or love. I've come
From cankered ports and steel towns
To this: December in a northern state,
A month of wind and little light.
Wood split, flue cleaned, and ashes hauled,
I am proof against the cold
And make my place before the stove.
Mired fast in middle age, possessed
Of spavined barn and brambled lot,
I think of that fierce-minded woman
Whom I loved, painting in a small,
Unheated room, or of a friend,
Sharp-ribbed from poverty, who sized
And framed a timber house by hand
And writes each night by kerosene.
I think, that is, of others who
Edged off from commerce and the world
To work for joy instead of gain:
O would that I could gather them
This Yuletide, and shower them with coins.

—Norman Williams

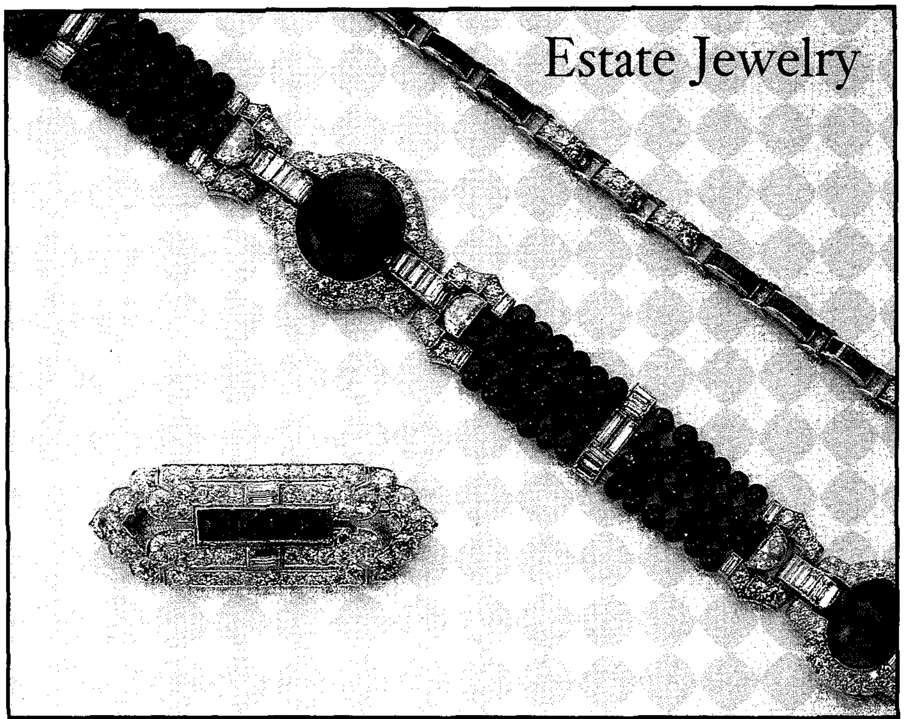
• •

weather from water sprayed on them to keep their delicate freight from overheating. Among the cattle and horse and hog salesmen moved the abattoir owners and their employees, and also the carpenters who stiffened the stockyards against a tide of livestock that could put a wooden building out of kilter just by leaning. And among the workers moved the stock itself, driven through the parish of Precious Blood to the auction yards and slaughterhouses. Their route took them through ordinary residential streets, past deep-set porches and narrow side yards, where neighbors gathered to watch the procession. Fights broke out between drovers and homeowners who saw their yards being trampled and their walks fouled. Police were called in to quell riots, and city ordinances were passed to confine the movement of animals to certain streets.

In the neighborhoods bordering the stockyards, a shadow economy arose. After a herd passed by, locals gathered "dumplings" from the streets to fertilize their gardens. At the abattoirs, hog livers, hearts, and offal were given away to anyone who wanted them. When Thomas Wenzek was still new to Buffalo, he might have ridden down William Street on an I.R.C. trolley lit by gas lamps and strewn with warm straw and seen a crowd of patient women strung along the tracks beside the Will Poultry Company. Every year, the city markets ordered several railroad carfuls of chickens for the Easter table, each car holding four thousand hens. The women were standing in line to buy the eggs the hens had laid en route to their demise.

The trackside fringes of East Buffalo were filled with Poles who had once pined for mere subsistence. In Austria-Hungary, many of them had relied on the illicit good things found in a nobleman's forest preserve to ease the harshness of peasant life—things like firewood, mushrooms, and snared rabbits and game birds. In America, they turned to the rail yard, itself an extensive private preserve.

Day and night, residents of the surrounding streets trickled across the railroad's boundary, children and babushka-wearing women dressed in their oldest clothes, carrying bags and baskets, wary of yard bulls and coasting boxcars. They found coal littered among the tracks and gathered it—coal that it was uneconomical for the rail-



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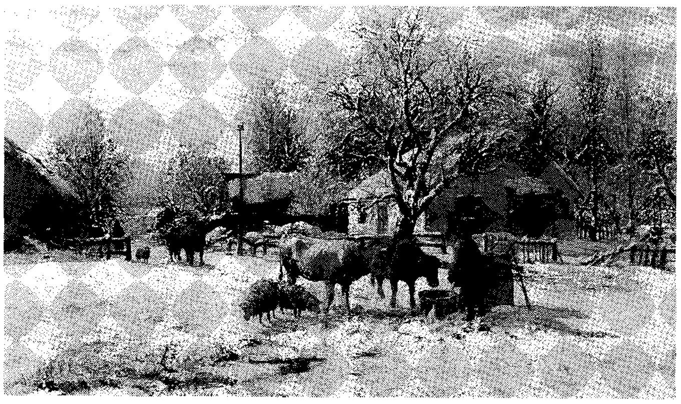

"New England Winter Scene," 28″ x 48″, Oil on canvas, S.L.R.

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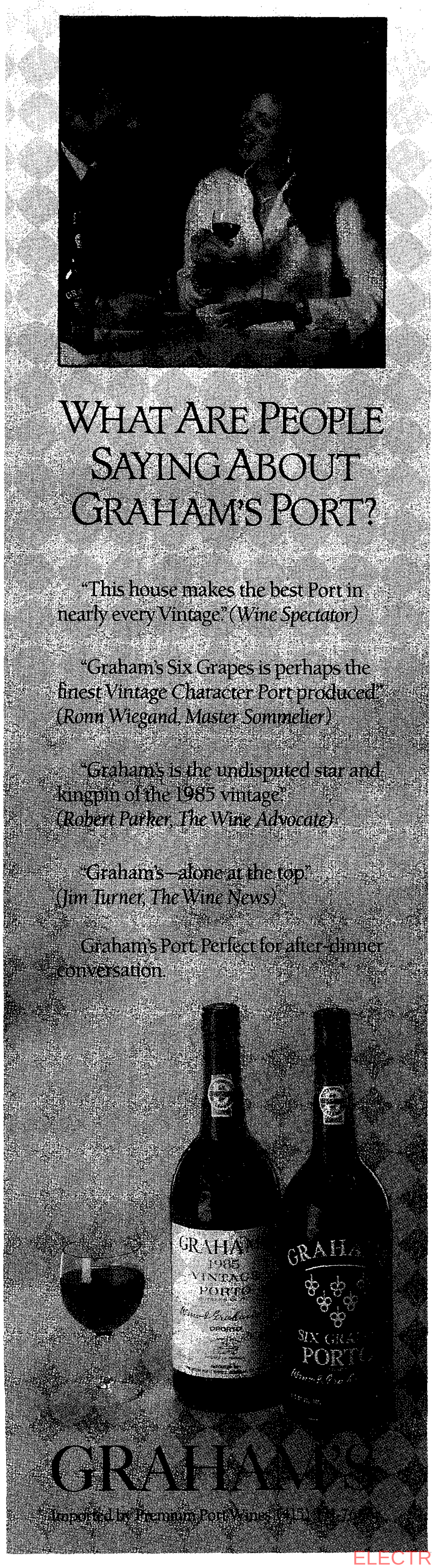
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roads to recover. They gathered whatever blew out of the doors of boxcars or fell off poorly tarped flatcars—straw for their gardens, lengths of iron and steel, miscellaneous objects of almost any description. Near the repair shops where old railroad cars were broken apart, they gathered wood scraps still bearing the marks of the road, boards covered with paint that shrivelled and spat when they burned in the stoves of trackside bars.

As day fell, the laboring crowd teemed out of factory yards and works. With each tick of the time clock, the past receded, and, to one degree or another, the mass of Polish immigrants—their English improved, their accent softened—put on America and put off the Old World. Enough changed so that to young Poles once from the Austrian province of Galicia the words rang strangely true when Mayor Louis P. Fuhrmann, a former abattoir boy, rose in November, 1915, before the First Preparedness Meeting at the Bankers' Club in New York City and said, "Buffalo, the one uniquely cosmopolitan city of the United States—a city composed of almost equal parts of a citizenship of German, Irish, Italian, Hungarian and Polish antecedents—is in unanimous accord with the sentiment 'America First.' "

Isolationism ended, war became a reality. The Buffalo firm of Pierce-Arrow assembled Army trucks in the Broadway Auditorium, which was normally given over to boxing bouts and meetings of the Anti-Lynching Committee, card parties for the Knights of Pythias and the Zuleika Grotto, conventions of the Arbeiter Saengerbund and the Woodmen of the World. There were spontaneous displays of patriotism: an Italian water boy named Tony Monanco appeared at a recruiting center and said (his words recorded for posterity, like Mayor Fuhrmann's—such is America), "Ma name Tony Monanco. In dees countra seex months. Gimme da gun." Buffalo schoolgirls formed a living Red Cross. Officers of the Polish Legion reviewed Polish volunteers on the steps of City Hall. Films entitled "How Life Begins" and "The End of the Road" were shown at social-hygiene lectures. A replica of the United States Treasury Building was constructed in Lafayette Square for a Liberty Loan drive and later reërected at Fillmore and Broadway, the heart of the East Side. For another drive, residents of New York state rolled a six-foot striped Liberty Ball from Buffalo all the way to Manhattan. Despite the epidemic of influenza, which closed schools in Buffalo, John Philip Sousa and his Great Lakes Naval Training Station Band marched through the city, warming the blood of all those who did not already lie fevered with flu. Battalions ranked in cracker-jack formation swept down the avenues and boulevards. A small troop drawn from Buffalo's black community paraded down an ordinary street. "Never before in the history of the world," Mayor Fuhrmann said, in 1916, "has it meant more to be an American citizen than it means to-day."

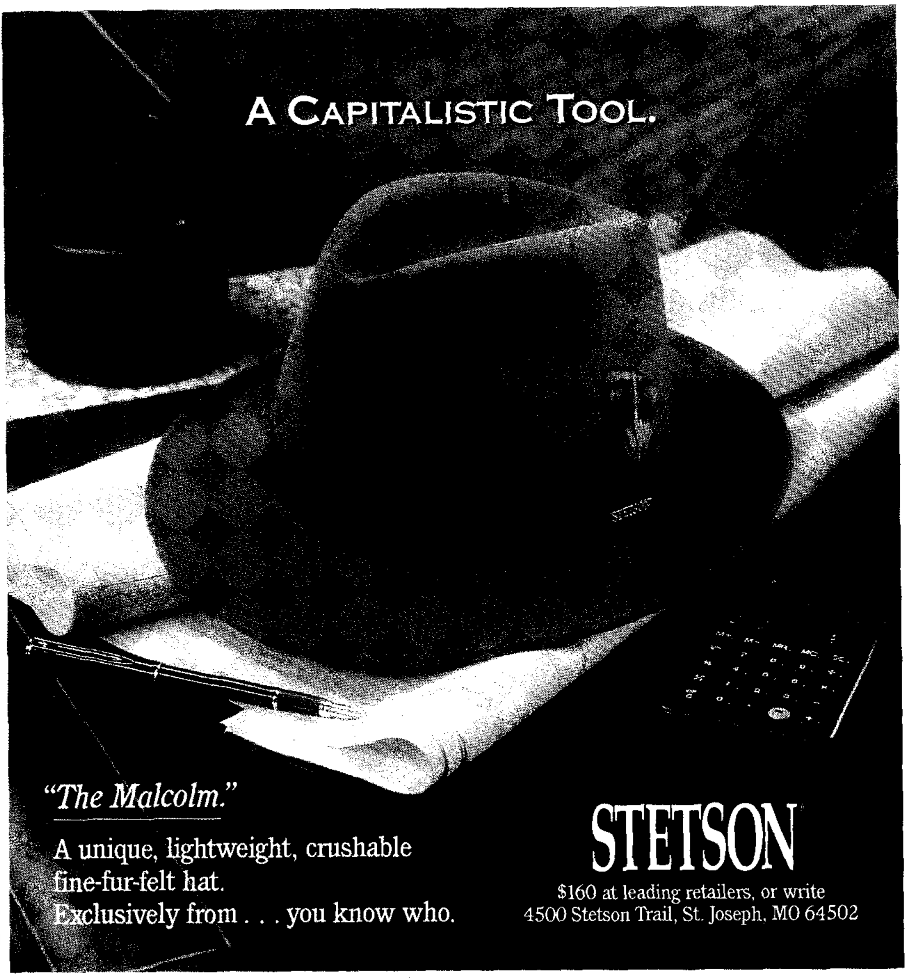
BOTH Tom Wenzek and his wife, Freda, lost their fathers in the 1918 influenza. Tom's died in what was then still Austria; the following year, the Treaty of Versailles made it Poland. Freda's father, a Lehigh Valley Railroad hand, died in Buffalo. Desperately ill, he could not be kept from going down to the yards to pick up his week's pay envelope. He handed it to his wife, Anastasya. Then to her and to their eight children he delivered a blessing. "You will do well and you will do well and you will do well and you will do well," he is reported to have said, encompassing them all. "But I am about to die." These words he uttered in Polish, for Anastasya never spoke anything else.

Freda did do well. She became a sister to her mother and a mother to her sisters and brothers, all younger than she. She learned to cook at the Statler Hotel. She married a man with ambition. She understood implicitly the scope of her future labors. In her wedding photograph, taken in 1915, the former Wladyslawa Freda Zaleska's mouth turns naturally downward at the corners—into the same shape as Tom's mustache—but her lips look fuller than they did later. That characteristic slant gives her an air of stolid patience, though she was a cheerful woman. Her shoulders slope, too, as if under the promise of a burden. In the same breath with which people admired Tom Wenzek's handshake they said that his wife was a saint.

Watching Buffalo's thousands of shift workers pour through the streets morning and evening, both Tom and Freda knew that proprietorship was the only escape from the weekly pay envelope, the only way to avoid the solemn walk that Freda's dying father took, from his house, on North Ogden Street, to the Lehigh Valley Railroad payroll office. Tom and Freda tried a grocery and butcher shop. Tom made deliveries in a horse cart while Freda tended the counter. But there was something too static about being a grocer. For a time, Tom and Freda ran a blind pig on Shanley Street, just inside Cheektowaga from the city line, and not far from the East Side rail yards. (The term "blind pig" arose, according to the Dictionary of American Regional English, from the practice of advertising the spectacle of a blind pig, "charging 25 cents for a sight of the pig and throwing in a gin cocktail gratuitously." Any store that sold liquor illegally came to be known as a blind pig.) On Shanley Street, Tom and Freda sold Friday fish fry, two pieces for ten cents. They sold cigarettes for a penny each, pints of moonshine for half a dollar, and shots for a dime. When Tom moved to 722 Sycamore Street, in 1922, he set his sister Julia up in business in the blind pig he left behind.

The new place lay three miles farther downtown than Shanley Street, near a district that was predominantly German—an immigrant nationality that defined respectability and whose proximity marked a distinct rise in Tom Wenzek's fortunes. When Tom bought 722 Sycamore Street, with a loan from the William Simon Brewery, it was a high-ceilinged, cavernously unadorned bar, an idlers' kind of place. In the days before Prohibition, a teamster with a horse van full of crated Vim bicycles ("GET THERE AND GET BACK") might pull up and soak his mustaches in lager. Any excuse might draw the patrons out onto the front walk: a domestic brawl, or a hailstorm, or the passing of a meat wagon with whole dressed hogs squinting forward on top. The year 1922 was an odd one for buying a saloon unless you believed that Prohibition, which could not have found a more appropriate target for its fundamentalism than an Eastern-Europe-born, German-and-Polish-speaking, Catholic saloonkeeper, would one day expire of simple hypocrisy.

Though Tom Wenzek tended the bar at 722 Sycamore Street, the business was also an outfolding of Freda's character. She deepened her husband's natural sense of hospitality into a warmer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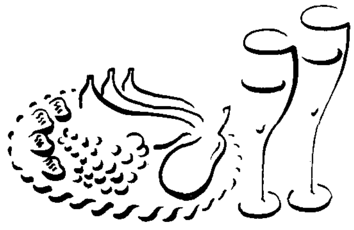

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and more sustaining welcome—a domesticity he might have found embarrassing anywhere but in a bar full of masculine appurtenances like a billiard table and a balky coal-fired stove. Her kitchen loaded the steam table, which always needed replenishing. (In Buffalo, it was illegal to operate even a near-beer saloon without serving food.) At eight o'clock every morning, she opened the front door to neighbors on their way to work or just coming off their shift. She dealt with provisioners throughout the forenoon, venders to whom Tom was almost a stranger. Hers was the decency that chastened tongues in the bar, the firmness that never needed an iron handshake or a tart little mustache to make itself felt.

Behind the scenes at 722 Sycamore Street, the breakfast kuchen constantly needed making, the woman hired to help in the kitchen required careful watching, and so did the porter (always a drunk) who came to clean in the morning. By the early nineteen-twenties, there were four children to bring up, and six boarders, who lived in the upstairs front, and whose comings and goings needed attending. The geese for Freda's goose-blood soup left behind feathers and down for making feather beds. Sometimes, toward the end of a long afternoon Freda went into the small bedroom off the kitchen in the back of the building, sat on the edge of her bed, let the corners of her mouth down to their fullest extent, and bathed her eyes with a cold washrag.

On the dresser in that back bedroom sat a small black enamel box, whose lid was inlaid with the name "Krakowa"—that is, Cracow. It was a memento of a trip to Poland that Tom and Freda took in 1929. Tom had been tipped off by the cops that the summer of 1929 might be a good time for a saloonkeeper whose patrons still drank full-bodied whiskey and strong beer—not to mention denatured alcohol thinned down to proof and aged with food coloring—to consider taking a trip abroad.

On the passport he was issued in May, 1929, Thomas Wenzek gave his occupation as "florist." That was a nice evasion but not an untruth, and 1929 was not a year in which to list "saloonkeeper" as your trade. (In the Buffalo City Directory, the category "Saloon" had been replaced by "Soft Drinks," also a nice evasion.) To supplement the take at 722 Sycamore, Tom Wenzek had become a florist, too. In a Ford panel truck, he visited growers on outlying farms in the early morning for potted plants and then bought cut blooms in Buffalo's flower district, on Oak Street. Freda and her four sisters, in addition to their other duties, kept a florist's stand at the Black Rock Market, not far from the Niagara River. On holidays, Tom and Freda took their place beside the right-of-way leading to St. Stanislaus Cemetery, a pristine Catholic graveyard in Cheektowaga, and sold geraniums from a long plank beside the graveyard entrance.

For her passport photograph Freda wore a fur stole, a pearl necklace, and a ribbed felt hat with a sash around it. The German Consulate in Buffalo issued a visa. Tom gave their foreign address as Piwniczna; that was his birthplace, in Galicia—a town of twenty-two hundred residents on the Poprad River. The couple sailed from New York City, and they arrived in Cherbourg on June 14, 1929. They departed from Cherbourg exactly two months later, having spent the night of the summer solstice in Warsaw's Polonia Palace Hotel. They returned with gifts for the family, postcard views of Paris and the Tatra Mountains, and the black enamel box with the name "Krakowa" on its lid.

ON one of the early days of his retirement—a Friday in late September, 1947—Tom Wenzek stumps downstairs with a short cigar in his mouth after a noon breakfast of calves' brains scrambled with eggs and bacon. Tom has sold the bar to his son Eddie and to his son-in-law, George Ditzel, and he has leased the boys the premises. They call it George & Eddie's, because, Eddie says, "Eddie & George's isn't phonetic." Tom will spend the afternoon playing cards and tending his rose garden, a sliver of land on the west side of 722 Sycamore Street. He escorts anyone who makes the smallest gesture of interest to see his roses in season, then presents him with a boutonnière or her with a long-stem. This time of year, the roses are all thorn and stalk, so Tom will spade shrimp shells—from the new menu at George & Eddie's—into the soil. He has bathed and shaved, as he always does, using a freshly stropped straight razor with a mother-of-pearl handle. Instead of a white shirt and tie—the bartender's uniform—he wears a Hawaiian shirt, token of nominal retirement.

Tom has still not absorbed the changes that Eddie and George have made in the bar: cool white and tangerine neon lights recessed in alcoves, scalloped valences over the windows, a plum-and-dark-green paint scheme, black linoleum tiles on the front-bar step, a dropped acoustic-tile ceiling, venetian blinds. Artificial flowers flank the marble columns flanking the mirror. All the bottles are hidden beneath the front bar, as if their labels were a bartender's private picture gallery. The place looks like the rear seat of a Packard. Eddie is not going to sell many pickled lambs' tongues in that room, even at two for fifteen cents.

For years, black and white Dutch tiles formed a trough under the bar's front edge, a long, irrigated cuspidor for a habit that has mostly died out. Now the trough is gone. The only customer who still chews tobacco in the bar is an old-timer with palsy. If he gets the shakes with a lipful, he has to be carried outside, drooling and spitting the whole way. No one is happy to see him, but a certain respect is owed to the old-time regulars, for whom this place has been almost as much a home as it has been for Tom.

On these walls there used to be frescoes: woodlands; mountains; pond scenes in the bathroom. Tom Wenzek's restaurant used to be a place where you could bring your eyes as well as your palate for a treat. This used to be a neighborhood of vigorous, if moderately chaste, sensuality—a ward and a parish that liked its sensory pleasures strong, just as it liked its religion gaudy but taut. Here there were riotous cheeses, pungently brined lamb tongues, coarse tobacco, smoked-liver-sausage sandwiches, corrosive spirits, birch beer on tap for children and for ladies who liked to order a Cincinnati—half birch beer, half lager—and look for something vivid on the walls. But 1947 comes and young people want something different: they want a bar painted in solid hues, where the only thing to look at is the way the color scheme makes the contours of your neighbor's head pop out in relief. They want a place where you watch your mouth. And George & Eddie's is right for the times; the place packs them in. There is more business now than Tom has seen since December, 1941.

Eddie stands in the early-afternoon light behind the front corner of the bar,

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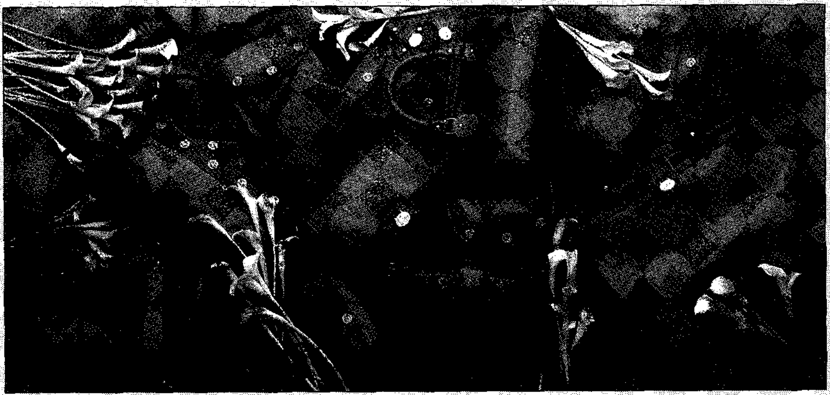

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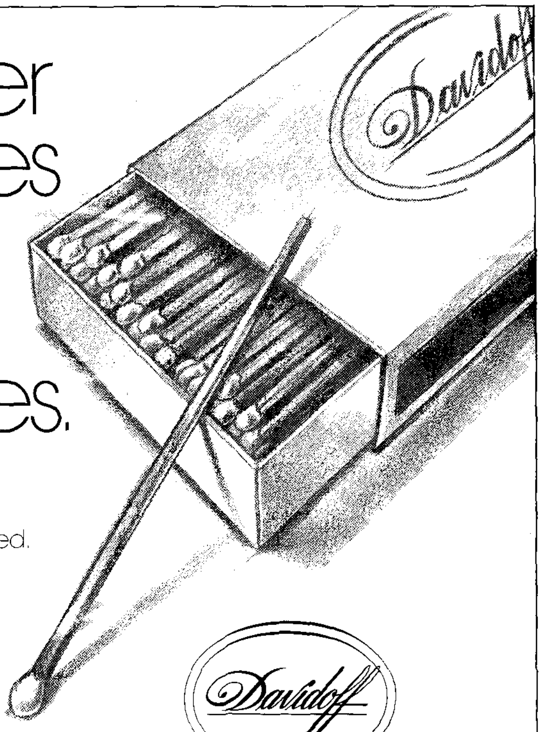

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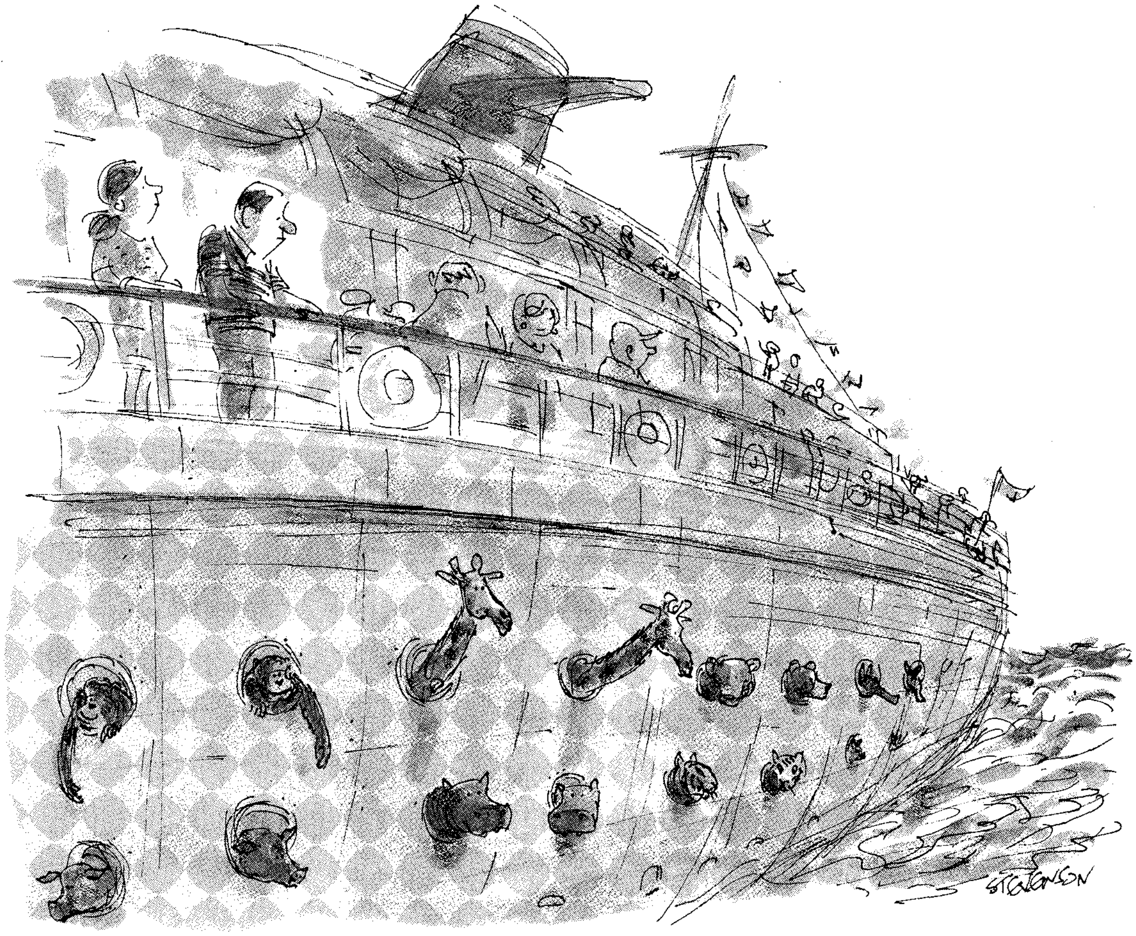


filling his father's place, talking to Ray and Joe, the deliverymen from the William Simon Brewery, which brews Simon Pure beer ("To be sure, drink Simon Pure") and sponsors the Simon Pure Hour of Music on WKBW. Ray is tall and Joe is short. When they make their delivery at George & Eddie's, Ray loiters by the truck while Joe rolls half barrels down the beer drop on the Herman side of the building, and they thump onto coils of rope and old tires.

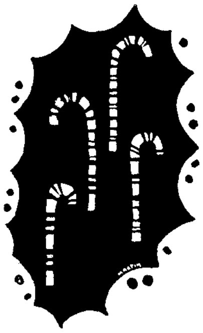
Eddie is framed in the back-bar mirror by marble columns with ornately foliate gilt Gothic capitals, columns as white and as lightly veined as the arms of the women who by evening will be scattered around the room, smoking cigarettes in sleeveless dresses. It is a frame that does almost everyone good, turning the surreptitious glances that customers shoot at the mirror into sudden reflections of sobriety. It is a frame that would ennoble a drunken Caesar. But a Friday-night crowd at George & Eddie's will not be a crowd of drunken Caesars. It will be working Buffalonians who have cut themselves loose from the week. All the women will come well dressed, and all the men will wear hats and ties, except for a table of older men—Tom's table—playing euchre under the Sycamore Street window.

Eddie's white shirt, sleeves rolled to the elbows, tucks into an equally white apron, of coarser cotton, that ends at his knees. The apron merely lengthens his slimness. His tie snakes smartly under the apron, and his socks set the tone of the bar. They are fancy, with the sort of abstract design one sees on the backcloth behind a radio bandstand: curves insinuating themselves over curves woven into the dull gleam of silk. Eddie floats behind the mahogany; he turns the bottles label-forward and aligns the rows of glasses in the manner of an organist touching all the stops before he plays. Do what he will, he seems too young to man the bar. His face reveals a spread of brow that his light-boned jaw can't balance, especially when he wears a hat. His head tilts upward naturally, or seems to do so, lifting from his shoulders. At Mass, that tilted head reveals a true believer's awe, rising to Transfiguration Church's vaulted peak, where incense gathers in a cloud. Behind the bar, the same look stands for "What's your poison?"

Jerry Pelczynski stops in briefly after a midafternoon haircut. Jerry runs the Governor's Inn, at Sycamore and Johnson, three blocks west of George & Eddie's. He knows all the ballplayers coming out of the Johnson Street playground, which has been rich in ballplayers. (In the long run, they end up assembling Fords.) The crowd at the Governor's Inn is largely Irish bricklayers and roofers and the shift workers from the Trico windshield-wiper plant. Jerry was one of the first eighteen-year-olds to go to war from Buffalo: Alabama for basic training, then San Francisco. He ended up in Alaska, where there were no women and no trees. Errol Flynn toured, and the men gave him a silver-fox pelt. Martha O'Driscoll—star of "Forty Little Mothers" and "We've Never Been Licked"—toured, and the men stole her underwear. While Jerry was in the Aleutians, he daydreamed about building a bar called the Rainbarrel Inn—a cask-shaped tavern with a sprinkler system on the roof, so water would spill down the sides just as it does on a real rain barrel standing at the foot of a downspout. But at war's end he opened the Governor's Inn. It stands on land that was once owned by the boss of Buffalo's largest shoplifting ring. Jerry had planned to name his bar the Viennese Inn, but his father, known to the family as the Governor, died just before it opened. "What better luck could I get than to use his name?" Jerry says. Now he has pictures of the forty-eight state executives on his walls. The day he opened, he was working out of a cigar box with three hundred dollars in change on loan from the Helgath Bakery, where all the local bars get their bread and kimmelwecks (kaiser rolls studded with kosher salt and caraway seeds). Helgath offered him a cash register, too. It's that kind of neighborhood.

Stan Wydro, another vet, stops in briefly, bringing with him a familiar crowd, which gathers whenever he appears. Stan is the good-will man at George & Eddie's. The good-will man at the Governor's Inn is Lefty Waller, a former ballplayer. Both work for the William Simon Brewery. They drive from tavern to tavern where Simon Pure beer is on tap, and spend a little company cash in each place—a return on interest, so to speak. They buy a couple of rounds for those assembled (and wherever they go they find bars preternaturally full), upping the take in every establishment they visit, giving the company they work for a common touch, providing a little boost to those in the neighborhood for whom even a single free beer improves the week's economy. Stan Wydro is almost totally abstemious. It's no wonder. All day, every day, he is in and out of bars, watching the people who know his schedule try to make their presence seem like coincidence.

"Beautiful" is a word heard in Buffalo whenever fish fry is served, which on the Polish East Side is Fridays from lunch until the commercial kitchens close, at midnight. Eddie uses the word. So do his customers. When the back-room waitresses at George & Eddie's walk by with fish-fry platters held high in the air, there are murmurs—"Beautiful"—from all those who catch a glimpse of them passing. They don't mean the waitresses; they mean the food. The murmurs intensify when a platter lands on a nearby table: half a deep-fried Lake Erie blue pike from Barcelona, down the coast, or George & Eddie's specialty—French-fried shrimp, using a batter recipe that was borrowed from Foit's, a lakeshore restaurant. ("These are real shrimp, not the butterflies," Eddie's customers say.) With the fish come a tossed salad, a cup of coleslaw, home-cut French fries, and a plate of Helgath's pumpernickel with butter, all for forty-five cents.



George & Eddie's fills with the sound of diners diving right into the beauty. The carriage lamps on the back-room walls have been dimmed. The dark wainscoting and the black spinet and the mirror make the back room feel cavernous. The restaurant begins to rattle with activity: three waitresses, hair tightly coiffed into chignons or plaits, dashing between tables, disappearing into the kitchen, where the turmoil can only be imagined—a cook, a dishwasher, a busboy, and two girls who do nothing but set up plates, all sharing a tiny space with a huge deep fryer.

The crowd is a diverse one, just as Eddie has hoped it would be—some folks from the neighborhood and some from nearly anywhere in the Niagara Frontier. At one table sit four teachers who come in weekdays on their thirty-six-minute lunch breaks and have now stopped for dinner after a late committee meeting. At another table, members of the department-store crowd from Broadway have gathered. There are familiar faces from the ice factory around the corner and from the silk mill on Guilford Street. Buffalo Forge has a couple of men here. Three priests, for whom this is a regular hangout, have walked over together from the Buffalo Diocesan Preparatory Seminary—known locally as the Minor Seminary—near Humboldt Parkway. Whole families wait in the bar, children playing among the stools. Seated alone at a table in the front room is a retired one-star general of infantry who lives at the Buffalo Athletic Club during the winter and in Crescent Beach, Ontario, during the summer. He drinks a Manru ("Make Mine Manru"), which is a luxury beer—it's named after Paderewski's only opera, a Gypsy melodrama set in Galicia—and is made by a local brewery called Schreiber's. The Schreiber's good-will man drives a Lincoln.

Outside, the evening has been laid in against the yellow clapboard of 722 Sycamore Street. The sign "GEORGE & EDDIE'S" begins to glow in the twilight. There is no getting around the changes at Sycamore and Herman, the way Eddie has brought the business up to 1947. The times have altered, and the corner has altered with them. What the changes really betoken is a shift starting to take place all across the city of Buffalo. In Tom Wenzek's day, the corner bar was truly, as Eddie says, the workingman's country club. Now the emphasis is

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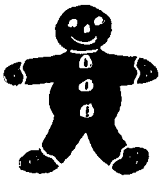
more on "country club" than on "workingman." Locals still frequent George & Eddie's, just as they frequented the Thomas Wenzek Restaurant. But some think it's too posh—as if Sycamore and Herman didn't rate a night spot where people could have a drink while wearing a tie or bring a date for something more than a schnapps and a pickled pig's foot from a jar on the bar. When Tom Wenzek ran the place, he was the workingman's friend. The ones who call him that these days are the ones who feel uneasy when they walk into his son's place with work boots on.



Those old-fashioned local patrons, Tom Wenzek's former customers, embody the resolute stasis of the East Side, its conservatism, as if what had changed since the war began were merely personal, with no implications beyond the immediate family. They can still walk through the Broadway Market, just a few blocks from George & Eddie's, without finding a difference from before the war in anything but prices. Shopping down the row of butchers' stands there—Wardynski, Piotrowski, Redlinski—they could still rebuild a pig from scratch. In the adjoining aisles they still find smoked eels and poppy butter and prune butter and, in Easter season, butter lambs. Taped to every stall there is a portrait of the Virgin or the Infant of Prague, just as there always has been. There is a pleasing chorus of Polish voices rising above the throng of shoppers and merchants and gossips, above the butchers' pretty young daughters in blunt haircuts, their hands stained with pork blood.

And yet, despite the appearance of stability, here in East Buffalo the neighborhood as they have known it is beginning to be over—over, at least, for the Poles whom the East Side has sustained for half a century, as it did Germans and Jews before them. Though no one sees the change coming, it surrounds them, in small ways as yet. Farther downtown, a new wave of immigrants has begun to occupy Buffalo—blacks, who drifted up from the South during and after the war, part of the sea of strong backs that Buffalo requires for its livelihood. As one ethnic group has always made way for another here, so the Poles will before long make way for the blacks.

The East Side has changed in other ways, too. Nobody ever drove to the Thomas Wenzek Restaurant; patrons walked from around the corner, down the street, across an alley. But to eat at George & Eddie's people think nothing of motoring from Amherst, Cheektowaga, West Seneca, Lancaster—even the Falls, and southern Ontario. And if people drive in from out of the neighborhood for fish fry at George & Eddie's it follows that they plan to drive out of the neighborhood to digest their dinners. That is a consequence of the new expressways, leading to the city line and beyond. If America learned anything in the war, it was engineering—engineering and the appeal of mobility.

But it is not just the return of peace and the retooling of American industry for home and highway that give 1947 its distinctive feel. In 1947, Buffalo is still an outpost of the big time. It's still a place where what is happening is happening, part of the club-act circuit—from Miami to Buffalo to Manhattan. In Buffalo, the piety of eating Friday fish fry coexists with a more secular sense of what Friday nights are for. That is the beauty of Catholic cities: the way the flesh and the spirit are grafted together. Roadside shrines look like driving ranges, and driving ranges look like roadside shrines: both strive for a wealth of immaculate lawn. In late September of 1947, Buffalo stages a Centennial Eucharistic Congress, honoring the Centenary of the Buffalo Diocese. A hundred thousand of the Catholic faithful gather to watch a massive ecclesiastical procession in Delaware Park, where everyone is grateful for the pleasant weather. For three days, the Buffalo *Evening News* runs pictures of important prelates, including Cardinal Spellman, next to articles with headlines like "CATHOLIC DENTISTS URGED TO ORGANIZE."

And, once the spirit has been satisfied, there are the insatiable cravings of the flesh—the kind an older generation indulged when they were young at Colvin Gables Open Air Dancing, at Colvin Avenue and Eggert Road, not far from the confluence of Ellicott Creek, Tonawanda Creek, and the Niagara River. Colvin Gables had a bandstand, and striped canvas awnings that could be raised and lowered over the huge unglazed openings in its walls. Dancers paid their money down and were admitted to smooth woodstrip footing and jumpy four-beat music. If the night was fair, the dancers inside were conscious of being outside, too, for a breeze might rustle dresses during a slow number, or they might feel the evaporation where their palms had been joined.

Now their children dance in clubs with a more sophisticated flavor: the Peter Stuyvesant Room, where they foxtrot on a backlit glass mosaic depicting that Dutchman's arrival in the New World; or Chez Ami, with its rotating dance floor. They go to Kleinhans for "The Hour of Charm," with an all-girl orchestra under the direction of Phil Spitalny, featuring Evelyn and Her Magic Violin, or to Sammy's Knotty Pine, where "Clara Williams, 250-pound singing star, is held over." They stop by the Town Casino to see the Three Suns, with the Wally Wanger Lovelies and Gloria French, the Princess of Song, or take a table at St. John Kanty Lyceum to hear Gene Krupa or Skitch Henderson. Some pay the cover at Frank's Casa Nova, where the 3 Gay Divorcees are opening for Peggy Lee, or they have a couple of cocktails at McVan's, where they sit through George Marx and Waldo, a ventriloquist act, followed by the Tremaine Twins, "identical dancing girls," with Shu Shu Crawford, m.c. They climb into their '47 Buicks with airfoil fenders and drive to The Stage Door; to the Rex Grill; to Club Annex, Club Moonglo, Club Genesee, Club Rainbow, Club Romay; to the Havana Casino; to the Anchor Bar. They park outside Dellwood Dances, where "Frank Mainuticawitz has 2 right arms and he uses them to play danceable rhythms."

And if the clubs are full or the acts are old hat, there is always Shea's Buffalo Theatre, on Main Street, one of the country's baroque movie temples. The picture at Shea's in late September of 1947 is "Wild Harvest," starring Dorothy Lamour, Alan Ladd, Robert Preston, and Lloyd Nolan. The *Catholic Union & Echo*, the principal East Side weekly, writes of it, "The love story runs parallel to the interesting and vital business of harvesting wheat. Ladd, Preston, and Nolan are members of a rugged harvesting combine crew that gets into all kinds of trouble, including a spectacular wheat fire, brawls with rival combines, and a set-to with irate farmers." At Basil's Lafayette they are showing "Something in the Wind," with Deanna Durbin; at Shea's Hippodrome, "Life with Father"; at the Twentieth Century, "They Won't Believe Me," with Susan Hayward and Robert Young.

Or, if the mood strikes one differently, one may simply walk with a date through the quiet streets downtown, where statuary watches benignly over the city. Everywhere there are heads of unimpeachable dignity looking down from friezes and cornices, staring outward from churchyards and monuments: Fillmore, Lincoln, Cleveland, McKinley; lions, turtles, and eagles; Civil War soldiers and sailors; minor deities; bland abstractions. Twin Statues of Liberty raise their torches atop the Liberty Bank Building. Gargoyles wink from the post office. From high on County Hall caryatids salute the Mechanical Arts, Agriculture, Commerce, Justice. City Hall is emblazoned with women of fierce fertility, who call to mind their Medusa-like sisters on the lobby walls within—bas-reliefs of Service, Fidelity, Aviation, Railroads, surrounded by muscular murals spouting mottoes like "Frontiers Unfettered by Any Frowning Fortress" and "Talents Diversified Find Vent In Myriad Forms." In this part of town there are no blue-clad Madonnas of the kind that compassionate the East Side, exalting them of low degree, sending the rich away empty. Here there are sirens of equity and increase.

BY midnight on a Friday in late September, 1947, stars are just beginning to appear from under the overcast in the farthest west. On the East Side, quiet houses spill light onto streets darkened further by the shade of elms. But beneath the new neon sign on the northwest corner of Sycamore and Herman music hangs in the air, amid the static of unceasing chatter and the rattle and ding of a distant pinball machine. From George & Eddie's back room a Bavarian trio (violin, accordion, bass) pumps out reedy, slimmed-down versions of swing onto Herman Street, from time to time mixing in a straight-up polka and what Tom Wenzek used to call on his menu "novelty music." Presiding over the band and the dance floor is Bill Grzel, violinist and proprietor of Aladdin Cleaners, on Genesee Street.

The screen door squeaks on its hinges. Eddie, wearing a clean white shirt and a fresh tie, waves from behind the bar. Tom Wenzek doles out his stern smile from behind a hand of Sixty-six. A different crowd from the one at dinner has filled the front room: men who have shaved themselves glossy but for eyeliner mustaches; women shellacked from bottom to top, their lips so crimson they print up black in snapshots. There are Sis Huetter and her husband, Al, who teaches and coaches now but used to work in New York City for Walter O'Malley, screening the clubhouse guests O'Malley invited to Dodgers games when he was out on the town. There's Curly Mayer, a butcher's son, but now the owner of a savings and loan, here with his wife. Beside her stands Ted Zawadski, who is famous for wearing a trim plaid tux on New Year's Eve, and Lorraine, his school-nurse date, a woman with soft black hair and a lovely figure. Ted is in baked goods; he also runs a liquor store and a billiards parlor at Wilson and Broadway, in what used to be one of the restaurants of the Waldorf chain.

Eddie's sister Jean is there—a dark, lanky belle, standing next to her husband, George Ditzel, who sold his dairy ("For Better Health Drink Hillcrest Milk—Hillcrest Dairy, Kilhoffer Street") to go partners in the bar with Eddie and to get mixed up in the pinball business. They live in the front apartment upstairs. There are Frank Heller, a minor-league ballplayer, his date, Mary, and Mary's home-town friend Renee (short for Irene, and pronounced Reeny) Celline, who has a way of perching saucily on a barstool and looking as if she were about to say something sharp. She is a waitress at the Lafayette Hotel, one of the most elegant spots in Buffalo. One day, Eddie will take Renee to dinner in the main dining room of the Lafayette. She will be so beautiful that he cannot eat his stuffed tomatoes. That night, Eddie will propose.

Eddie tells a story to the crowd at the bar. A guy goes to the doctor over on Fillmore, an older doctor. The doctor says to the guy, "Here I am about to retire and I've worked on every part

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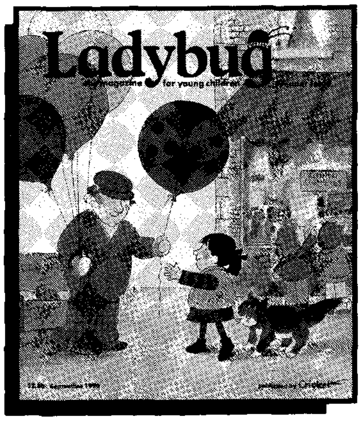

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of the body but one." Eddie pauses in wonder, spreading his arms, surveying his body. "And there's a lot of parts," Eddie says. Someone asks him what part the doctor has never worked on. "That part," says Eddie, "was the heel of the foot." It is a true story, and Eddie steps back to the center of the bar to pour a Simon Pure, which he will also imbue with his sense of the miraculous. Like the doctor, you would, if you sat in a bar long enough, see almost everything eventually. You would, Eddie says, become a student of human nature. One night, a local monsignor, the spitting image of Jimmy Cagney, insists on tending bar. Who can say no? Some nights, another high cleric, Monsignor Nuwer, from St. Mary of Sorrows, sits at the bar with Tom Wenzek, the two of them speaking German and sharing a fetid block of Limburger, no one else near.

Who knows what people get up to in bars? In quiet hours, Eddie's partner, George, gambles on the front bar with the bar dice; sometimes the winners tip his small son, Whitey, for bringing them good luck. Sometimes a table gets up an earnest pinochle game, the pot concealed beneath an ashtray. Men play the automatic nine-pin game up front or shovel nickels into the pinball machines, the equivalent of low-paying slots. They love the one-ball machine called The Future. If the steel ball falls in the proper hole, the bar owner pays off forty bucks. The bar owner splits the pinball take with the machine owner, a cut of a couple hundred a week—unless, like Eddie and George, the bar owner also owns the machines. In the black bars down toward Jefferson, the take is so heavy they don't bother to count nickels. The pinball man stops by twice a day, empties the coin box into two canvas bags, and tells the owner to take his pick.

In the riverside saloons, they trade a drunk a shot and a beer for a fresh-caught fish, which goes right to the kitchen, does a quick turnaround, and comes out in batter on the plate of some customer, who says "Beautiful" as he lifts away its skeleton. Legend has it that in the rough shore bars on Grand Island, taverns built on piers out over the river, there still exist trapdoors through which bodies were dumped in more violent days. Local myth also says that the bottom of the Niagara River is paved with bottles that were tumbled among the sediments when liquor smugglers, who lashed their freight overboard in case of pursuit, cut the ropes and sped away from the law in their famous black speedboats, more than a few of which ended up on the bottom, too.

In the Ninth Ward of Buffalo, George & Eddie's ward, a Friday night in 1947 ends with a drink in hand. That is another of the ways the corner of Sycamore and Herman has changed. In Tom Wenzek's day, before the war, people drank with a kind of desperation and a sheer capacity that has almost been forgotten. Now the vocation of public drunkenness is beginning to disappear—or, at least, to turn solemn and inward. There is no longer the tolerance there used to be, no longer the sense that it is the East Side against all comers, that a temperance type is a meddler, that a drunk muttering in the narrow streets is expressing a point of view familiar to the men and women passing by. In Tom Wenzek's day, drunkenness was just a form of exaggeration.

Times are indeed changing. Behind the bar, Eddie is a vision of neatness. His bottles are carefully lined up: Green River whiskey; Corby's; a local brand called Rewco; Seagram's 5-Crown; Schenley Black Label and Red Label; Calvert, Calvert Special, Lord Calvert; Black & White, Teachers, J & B, Hiram Walker 93 and 99; Tom Collins; Gordon's gin; Three Feathers Reserve whiskey. On the stainless-steel workstand Eddie has everything under control. He keeps his highball glasses here, his Old-Fashioned glasses here, his schupers—twenty-ounce beer mugs—here, his empties over there. He can mate the male and female ends of a half-barrel tap in the basement precooler without spilling a drop. He takes Canadian money at par. He knows every pose his customers use to order a drink, every grace of condescension. He knows how to explain that at George & Eddie's there is no book to drink on. He knows how to fend off the constant offers of "Have one on me" and when to lose the bar dice. He knows how to flatter a lonely woman without entanglement or offense.

This late, Eddie allows himself a drink or two, in addition to the one or two he has been nursing all night long. Like his father, he drinks without getting drunk, but he drinks not even a quarter of what Tom or his friends used to put away. This late, he will join the mood rather than prompt it, sample the expansive atmosphere in the bar. When the jukebox takes over for the Bavarian trio, and a more urbane music—Dinah Shore, Frankie Laine, Perry Como—slackens the tempo, then Eddie has time to be at home in his work, to allow a conversation to ripen, to light his pipe with the lion-shaped head and send its pleasant smoke curling into the air. What Eddie knows of the world lies at his fingertips. His interests are seated before him. He already walks in the path of his wishes.

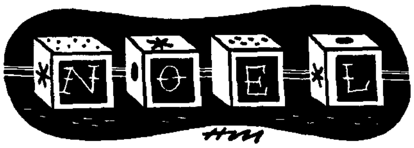
It is 3 A.M. Closing time all over Buffalo. Outside, the night has turned much cooler, with a swirling wind that plucks at the trees and rattles the rose stalks in the side garden. The stars cover the whole of the sky. Eddie locks the front door and turns out the lights. He flicks off the neon sign, and the corner dims by half. Then Eddie walks back behind the bar and pours another round of drinks—one for himself, the rest for a few friends. They sit in the dark and admire the stillness and the way reflections gradually surface from the depths of the mirror. They listen to the radiators starting to hiss.

IN 1953, George Ditzel—a tall, handsome man with blond hair and a long chin—sold his piece of the business to Eddie Wenzek, bought back into a retail dairy with five routes, and moved out of the front apartment above the bar and into the suburbs. George took his wife, Jean, his two children, his Buick convertible, and his golf stroke, and settled into a beautiful stone-and-pale-brick house on Hunting Road, a curving street in Cheektowaga, on the edge of the more sumptuous community of Amherst. The house was a dream. It had a knotty-pine basement with a wet bar and a Ping-Pong table. It had velvety painted interior walls and a flagstone porch and a patio. It had a Colonial kitchen. There was space in the master bedroom for a full-sized vanity and space on the sideboard to display all the cups and the punch bowl that Freda Wenzek had given her daughter. There was a closet in every bedroom. The Grover Cleveland Golf Course was only a few blocks away.

Every Sunday, Jean and George stopped by 722 Sycamore Street on their way home from the church they attended, near Humboldt Parkway. Every Friday, they returned to eat fish fry. They sat at the bar and had drinks with Eddie and Renee. They visited with Tom downstairs and with Freda upstairs and said hello to friends having dinner in the back room. Then they got in the convertible and drove home to Hunting Road on one of the new expressways leading to the city's edge. It was a miracle how clean the suburbs looked, how wide the windows opened, how fresh the air smelled. Time, it seemed, had been checked.

But on the East Side of Buffalo the years passed more quickly than anyone had ever dreamed possible. Eddie Wenzek and his bride moved into the front apartment above the bar, and Renee decorated it with the advice of a downtown department store. The accent was on lightness and newness. There were scalloped moldings and knotty-pine wainscoting left from the Ditzels' years there. (Jean adored knotty pine.) For the kitchen Renee chose a wallpaper with country flair—roosters and barns and ears of corn. Ceramic dogs and chunks of Hawaiian coral lined the living-room bookshelves. The armchairs were armless. The coffee table and the matching desk were made of blond wood with black iron drawer pulls. On the end tables stood lamps in the shape of Spanish dancers: a man wearing green tights and a black vest, a woman wearing a green skirt and a black bodice. Both lamps had black shades with furry trim.

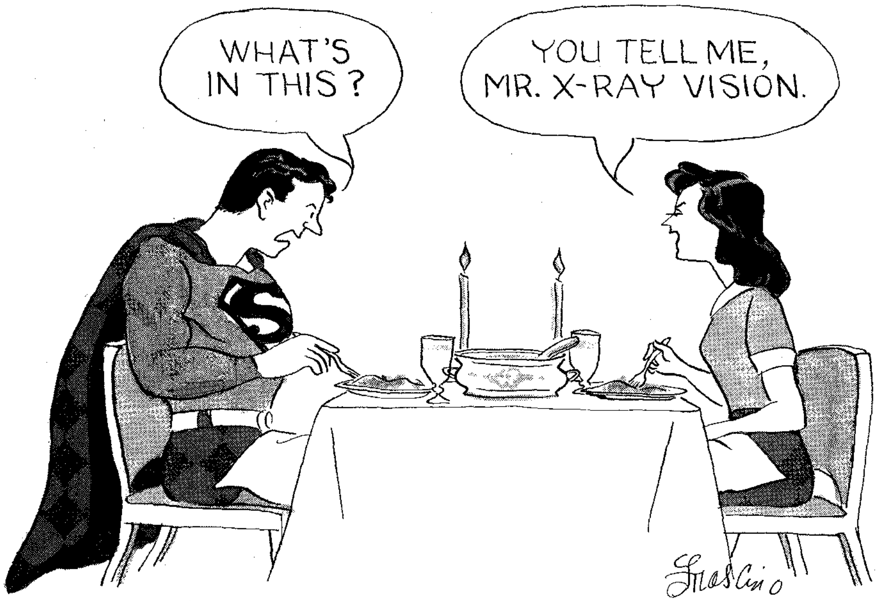
The bar itself scarcely aged, except in the eyes of those who had moved to the suburbs. In 1947, Eddie Wenzek and George Ditzel had thrown their grand-opening party with a sense of almost intolerable excitement. Everything but the hangovers had been new. And now, just like that, George & Eddie's had served drinks and dinner for a thousand nights running, then two thousand, then three thousand, and soon there were two little girls, Eddie's daughters, Cindy and Reggie, riding tricycles the length of the restaurant in the still morning hours, when only a few men were tippling on stools at the bar. One minute, Eddie was polishing a maroon 1949 Cadillac. Then he was pulling a blue-and-white '54 Olds 98 out of the garage. Before long, he was honking for Renee and the girls in a black '57 Olds 98 with red stripes.



When George and Jean drove down to the East Side after a few months in their new house, they saw things they had never really seen before, though they had lived on the East Side all their lives. They saw that 722 Sycamore Street was a building on which generation after generation, including their own, had left its mark. It had dominated the corner of Sycamore and Herman since the late nineteenth century. How many owners had there been in that time? Three men—Frank Lauk, Jacob Bystiak, and John Buclaw—had owned it just in the seven years before 1922, when Thomas Wenzek bought it. How large were their families, and how many strangers had roomed upstairs? No one knew. What were the building's original outlines? Lost.

Over the last hundred years, nearly every wave of immigrants to reach Buffalo—Jews, Germans, Poles, and now blacks—had swept through the East Side, reworking it to their needs until they had saved enough money to move to more middle-class sections of town. For every corner business that had prospered—every Thomas Wenzek Restaurant, every George & Eddie's—a dozen had failed. The oldest blocks were entirely piecemeal, their rows of houses telescoped, patched, and reporched until they looked nothing alike. It was a jumble of eras, decade heaped upon century.

It was the same with people on the East Side—a jumble of ages and kinds. Schoolgirls in white blouses and blue jumpers ended their Friday-morning Communion fast with jelly doughnuts and cartons of milk from Zwack's Delicatessen. They had crossed Genesee Street holding hands two by two as Franciscan nuns from St. Mary of Sorrows kept watch. During the Sacrament, the girls had knelt beside women of pious character—women who, had it not been for husbands with ruddy temperaments and firm holds on life, would perhaps have bound themselves fast by the three knots the nuns wore at the ends of their rope belts, one knot for each of their vows. Those kneeling women needed no suburbs. They needed a pew and the Broadway Market. In the pew, they could study the delicate lineaments of the crucified Christ, and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in the market they could see what it means for the word to become flesh. The people there, and all across the East Side, were as varied as the produce on display in tilted-up boxes and crates: eggplants, onions, tomatoes, radishes, potatoes, turnips, beets, a Turk's-turban squash every now and then.

And the variety of people had only grown since the war. For where there had been scarcely a black man or woman in Buffalo—there were only forty-five hundred blacks in 1920, when Eddie Wenzek was born—they numbered now in the many tens of thousands. They had begun arriving from the South just as Buffalo's heavy industry, where every other migrating generation had found work and the means to rise in the world, started to shut down after the war. Like the Polish immigrants before them, Buffalo's black people came to (and were pushed toward) the only neighborhood they could afford: the East Side, and especially near Jefferson Avenue, eight blocks west of George & Eddie's.

When Poles first settled in East Buffalo, they had faced the shopkeeping, beer-brewing pride—and the ancient hostility to Slavs—of the Germans who had come there before them. Between the Poles and the blacks there was even less sympathy. Like many whites in the city, the residents of the East Side, who themselves had been described by Woodrow Wilson as their countries' "sordid and hapless elements" and "men out of the ranks where there was neither skill nor energy nor any initiative of quick intelligence," now looked on their black neighbors with similar feelings. On the major streets of East Buffalo, on Broadway and Sycamore and Genesee, "FOR RENT" signs began to appear only in Polish, and they went longer and longer unanswered.

In 1957, Freda Wenzek died, at 722 Sycamore Street, after settling with a frail sigh, her weak heart gone, into a chair, from which her son and her husband were powerless to raise her. In her absence, Thomas Wenzek, his hair grown the color of frozen asphalt, lived more and more downstairs, in the hubbub of the bar. And yet, as time passed, the back apartment—a rambling set of rooms with floral curtains and stout velvet furniture, an ornamental fireplace, Persian rugs, icons and statues, chandeliers and shell sconces of translucent pink glass, a bathroom adorned with the same aquatic frescoes the bar bathroom had once featured—came inevitably to seem fuller of Tom and emptier of Freda, though now and then Tom caught a reminiscence of her scent, as pleasing as that of the cedar closet in Freda's bedroom or that of the attic, where she had stored barrels full of linen and broken china. The rest of the apartment began to smell of Liederkranz cheese, a dark and dated odor.

Tom grew closer to his sister Julia, who had come to the United States in 1910. Instead of taking his homemade sausages to be smoked at the Wardynski sausage plant, near St. Stanislaus Church, he drove to Julia's house, on Weaver Street, down near the shrunken railroads, not far from the old Black Diamond Bar, which she and her husband, Frank Pajonk, had run for a time. In the back yard Julia kept a fifty-five-gallon oil drum she had turned into a smoker. Together, Julia and Tom hung sausages over a broomstick and kindled a cool, hardwood fire at the base of the drum.

In return, Julia and Frank, retired and without a bar of their own anymore, began to frequent George & Eddie's regularly, joining Tom at the front-window table, where, except for his annual Florida vacation and the trip to Poland, he had sat for a part of each day going on forty years now. Julia Pajonk had become a woman of indeterminate age, with wicker-colored hair and thick, strong arms, like Tom's. On Sunday afternoons, she and Tom drove in his car down the Erie coast, stopping in saloons along Lake Shore Road, pausing here and there to look at the slag heaps in Lackawanna, where the steel mills were breathing their last, or to stand on the bluffs farther south and wonder why Canada got the sand and the United States the rocks. Sometimes, instead of turning south, Tom turned north and then west, following the River Road as it bent toward Niagara Falls. They watched the bland banks of Grand Island slide along the far side of the Tonawanda Channel, low trees and willows hanging over the water and darkening it with shadows. Sailboats toyed in the broad river, always nervous of the reaches below Navy Island, where mist billowed up from the Falls. Powerboats like the one Eddie Wenzek owned in the early fifties, the Ree Nee, blatted rudely upstream, crisscrossing wakes. Oil refineries and chemical plants soured the air and adulterated the landscape. High-tension power lines towered suddenly aloft from substations and looped away southward into the distance. And in parking lots on both sides of Niagara Falls the curious gathered to watch that crest where the water of the Niagara River suddenly turns luminous green, that great slab of water sliding eerily, greasily toward the edge.

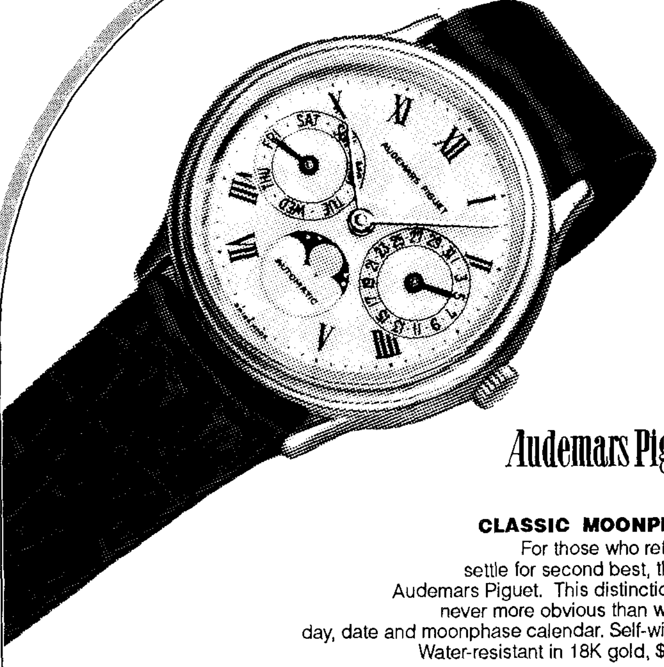
The Buffalo story is secretly a story about the Falls, for Buffalo was built upstream of a timeless catastrophe. When Eddie Wenzek pours a drink and starts a tale, he is often about to tell the saga of some man who, metaphorically speaking, was walking north along Niagara Street one day, took a misstep to the left, landed in the river, and was borne into oblivion. The guy had a nice car (a Buick, a Cadillac, a Packard, an Olds). He had a beautiful wife with a lovely figure. He had a couple of nice kids, a good job, and always plenty of cash in pocket, a roll as big as your fist. He had everything the Niagara Frontier could offer. But one day the misstep occurred—he lost it all—and he was swept right over the Falls. It was a nice funeral, with lots of the old crowd on hand. Eddie was a pallbearer again and again, a sign of the breadth of his acquaintance and the esteem in which bar owners were held on the East Side.

Take Eddie's friend whose real-estate license came in the mail on the day he died. Or consider the fellow who ran a tavern called Bob's Castaway. ("Bob was the guy's name.") The moral turns, as always, on the loss of assets, the going over the Falls from what had seemed a good life. "This guy had a Chrysler Imperial, looked like a limousine; of course, they all looked like limousines in those days." Bob sold mutual funds while tending bar. But he was also a Casanova. "The husband came home," Eddie says, "caught the two of them, and shot the masher. Dead."

Or imagine the case of the highborn Polish émigré. This was a man of aristocratic birth, reared in Europe, a son of culture and a violinist in the Buffalo Philharmonic. (And, as Eddie says, "when you're philharmonic anything, you're the best.") To make a buck, he took a job distributing second-rate liquor, and Eddie, who usually bought only the top-drawer stuff, bought some now and again out of simple charity. The violinist's fatal weaknesses were women and the ponies. One day, the disparity of it all overwhelmed him, and he drove his car into the water at the Buffalo Yacht Club. They pulled his body out before it went over the Falls—at the foot of the pier, as a matter of fact—but the principle remains the same.

It's a potent story. It's a wonder Buffalo doesn't hurl an average citizen over the Falls each year just to reinforce the point.

After one of those long Sunday drives, sometime in the early sixties,



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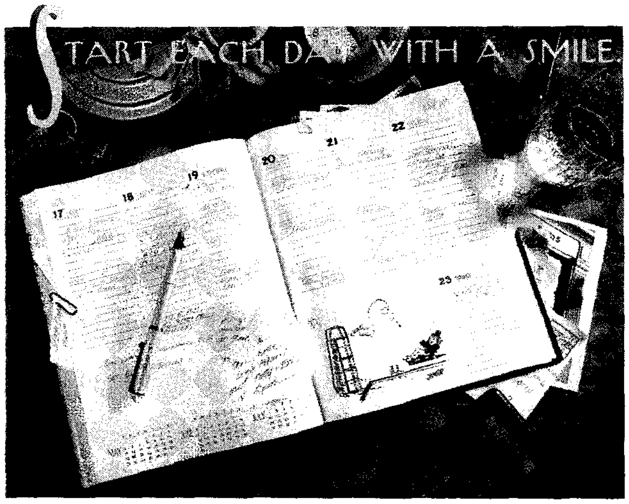

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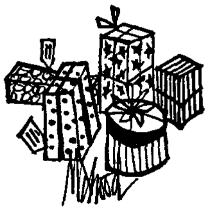
Thomas Wenzek found it hard to eat. His appetite left him. At the hospital, the diagnosis was bowel cancer. A young surgeon sketched for Eddie a diagram of Thomas Wenzek's intestines on a cafeteria napkin, showing what he planned to cut away and how he intended to resection. To Eddie, in private, the surgeon gave his father two years to live.

When Tom retired, in 1947, his friends and his family had asked him why he and Freda didn't move to the suburbs. Why not buy a small house where he could expand his rose garden and enjoy some peace? Tom said he didn't want a private place—he wanted to see his friends. Day after day, Tom sat at his window table and played cards and drank and watched Sycamore Street, though much of what he saw on the sidewalk he had grown to dislike. It made him wish for the old times back.

There had been a custom among saloonkeepers like Tom, a custom that George and Eddie didn't observe when they took over the bar. Every couple of weeks, in those days long past, a saloonkeeper would take a night off from his work and make a round of every saloon in the area. At each bar he visited, he stood drinks for the house, to prime the pump. It was a picture to remember—those bartenders wandering the streets of East Buffalo in turn, night after night, dropping in at nearly every corner for another shot, thawing their feet on the fender of a coal stove, warming their lungs in the moist barroom air, visiting with friends. If Tom worked it right, he'd end his circuit only a corner away from home and bed. Practically every night of the year, one saloonkeeper or another walked into the Thomas Wenzek Restaurant and told Tom to set 'em up. That had been society. That had been *reciprocation.* Why would anyone ever want to leave? Why would anyone want to live in a house where if you wandered downstairs at 2 A.M. you would not find a game of euchre going or a steam table full of roast-beef sandwiches on kimmelwecks?



A year after the operation to resect his colon, Tom returned from his Florida vacation with a peculiarly yellow tan, which was no tan at all but a sign that the cancer afflicting his bowel had invaded his liver. The doctors declared it inoperable. Tom began to drink Ovaltine made with cream. After a while, he let no one feed him but his nine-year-old granddaughter, Reggie, who lived across the hall, and whom Tom had taught to like calf brains with bacon in scrambled eggs. Then, one Thursday in early October, 1965, about the hour of the day when Tom was accustomed to having breakfast, Reggie came downstairs to tell her father, who was working the lunch rush behind the bar, that she thought that her grandfather was dead. She was right.

Eddie wept. The priests from Transfiguration and St. Mary of Sorrows arrived together. Okoniewski & Son handled the funeral arrangements. Eddie asked Mr. Okoniewski to turn off the mournful background music in the funeral parlor—everyone was far too sad already. "That's enough, now," George said to Jean, who had gone to pieces. A funeral Mass was said at Transfiguration Church at 10 A.M. Monday. Thomas Wenzek was buried beside Freda in St. Stanislaus Cemetery. The survivors drove back to George & Eddie's. Everyone said that the best thing for Eddie was to get right back to work. So Eddie opened the bar and everyone started to drink. "A Catholic funeral," Renee said. "You really know you're dead when it's over."

Thomas Wenzek lived on in his wishes. His children cleaned out the cupboards in the back apartment, as they had cleaned out their mother's closets nearly a decade before. One of the waitresses received a bedroom set. Renee gave the remaining furniture, except a few odds and ends, to the nuns at the Minor Seminary, where its stoutness was highly valued. She redecorated the back apartment. The accent was on the expunging of Thomas Wenzek's formidable presence. She removed the ornamental fireplace and filled in the windows that opened onto the deck on top of the garage. The icons and sacred statues disappeared. The photographs and a penny gravure of the Austrian imperial family went to the attic and were stored in the steamer trunk her father-in-law had brought with him from the Old World.

Everyone thought Eddie would sell out and move to the suburbs after his father's death, for the neighborhood was rapidly turning wholly black and the air had filled with invidiousness between the races. They were wrong. He was Tom's, and Freda's, son. Except for his three years in the service, Eddie had never lived farther from his parents than across a narrow hallway. He had lived at 722 Sycamore Street since he was two years old. He had always lived upstairs from his work. And even as the neighborhood changed, as the city and its realtors ghettoized the East Side, as the streets just downtown from the bar filled with angrier and angrier black people, as more and more Poles left for Cheektowaga, business at George & Eddie's improved. Weekends, the place was jammed with old East Siders who drove in for a top-shelf meal and a couple of drinks. But only weekends. Eddie began to close Tuesdays. Good bartenders got hard to find; the rest were drunks.

One June night in 1967, less than two years after his father's death, Eddie sent Renee and the girls to see George and Jean in Cheektowaga, and he stayed behind at 722 Sycamore Street. The sign outside and the lights in the bar had been turned off, so that Eddie could watch the street. He was not pouring after-hours drinks for a few friends. A disturbance had begun farther downtown, and for two nights it had fanned out through the East Side. The streets were full of young blacks rioting (though the police hesitated to use that word) in protest against bad housing and lack of jobs, as they would riot in Detroit and Chicago and Newark later that year. Cars were overturned, hundreds of young black men and women were arrested, and dozens were admitted to local emergency rooms with shotgun wounds. The police ordered all local merchants to close their stores and restaurants.

Eddie sat behind the bar with a twenty-two-calibre target rifle in his hands, waiting for the corner door to be flung open by a rioter. He planned to shoot one, if he had to. He planned to keep his bar, his father's bar, from being burned to the ground, the fire fuelled by his own liquor. Every light in the window of the bar seemed like a sign of arson outside. Finally, the Twelfth Precinct captain knocked at the door of George & Eddie's. "What the hell are you doing, Eddie?" he said. "I thought I told you to get out of here." And then he calmly informed Eddie that the riots were over, that the neighborhood was quiet again, and that he could put down his rifle and turn on the lights, or, better yet, call his wife and turn in.

It took three more years to persuade Eddie to sell the bar, and when he did so the price was a fraction of the business's former value. The buyer, Bill Harris, was a young black man with a loan from the Small Business Administration. Renee was so jubilant that she gave all her hats to Bill Harris's mother.

And soon, before anyone had time to think, May, 1970, had come and it was the very last night that George & Eddie's would ever be open. Eddie took inventory of his liquor stock and told all his regular customers that for two dollars a head they could drink as much as they wanted until the open bottles were empty—the unopened bottles belonged to the new owner. Renee went to bed early. Many friends stopped in to say goodbye. Eddie stayed up late that night. He saw the last customer, the last old friend, out the door at 4 A.M. He turned out the lights and locked the corner door behind him. Then, while Renee and the girls slept, he backed his '66 Buick Electra out of its heated garage and drove down to Front Park, under the Buffalo approach to the Peace Bridge. There, for the first time in his entire life, he watched the rising sun illuminate the waters of Lake Erie where they spill into the Niagara River and stream north to the Falls.

The Wenzeks moved to the suburbs. They kept a couple of barstools and some schupers as mementos. Eddie and Renee had considered several modest but beautiful houses in Amherst and Williamsville. In a development called Cayuga Heights they found what they were looking for—a Colonial with a closet in every bedroom. The builder lived next door. The house had never been occupied. Renee planned to take up gardening. The lot had no grass, no trees, no flowers, and no hedges. The back yard looked liked a field grown wild. At its farthest edge, there was a chain-link fence and a sharp grassy incline. That incline was the shoulder of the New York State Thruway, just where it widened for the Williamsville

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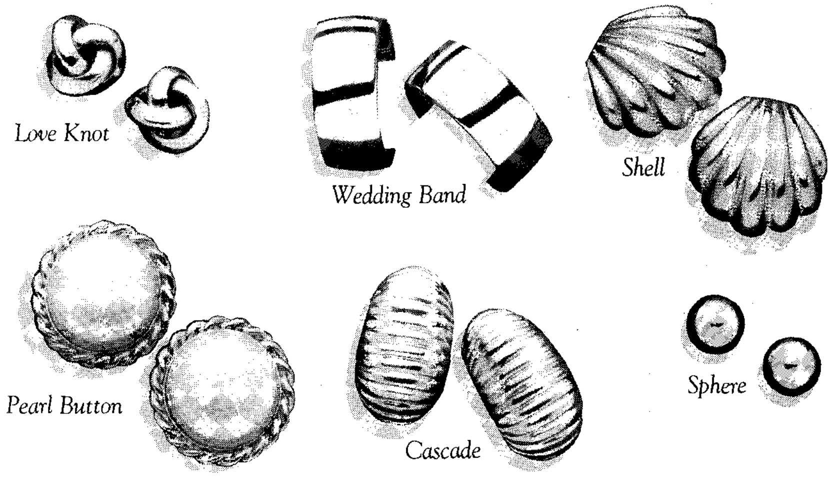

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toll booths, just where trucks geared down as they came into Buffalo and geared up as they pulled away. That was why Eddie and Renee chose this house. No one would ever build behind them.

After the Wenzeks left the East Side, Bill Harris removed the fat and meaty neon sign from the corner of the canary-colored building, where it had hung for twenty-three years. In its place he raised a white wooden sign with black lettering. George & Eddie's was now The Scorpion.

Under that name the bar stayed open for a year and a half. The Simon Brewery was no longer in business. Good-will men no longer existed. Blue pike were nearly extinct. Buffalo's elm trees had died long before. Bankruptcy overtook The Scorpion. There were no buyers. The building was abandoned. Soon its windows were broken out and boarded up. Someone worked a hole through the garage door and then through the back wall. Neighborhood kids smoked dope in the old liquor storeroom, a room that had been Eddie's—and, before him, his father's—office, a place once full of the delightful smell of wooden liquor cases. Several small fires were started inside the building. It was condemned.

A friend at City Hall called Eddie in Williamsville. The night before the bar was due to be demolished, Eddie drove down to the old neighborhood. He parked on Herman Street. With an old set of keys, he let himself into the building and stepped through the rubble, through the broken glass and the charred papers and the new, confusing odors. He walked into the barroom itself, where the damage was not nearly so bad. There was no saving the back-bar mirror, still framed by marble columns. Thomas Wenzek had obtained those columns from a Buffalo gentlemen's club that went out of business just before Prohibition. They had stood on the spot for fifty years. Eddie removed all four of them. He wrapped them in blankets and carried them to the trunk of his car.

The next morning, Eddie returned to the corner of Sycamore and Herman. He watched the city do its work. A crowd gathered. It cheered every time there was an especially loud crash. When the day ended, 722 Sycamore Street stood no more, and Eddie Wenzek drove home to his private place in the suburbs.

—VERLYN KLINKENBORG

# THE THEATRE

## *The Big Tease*

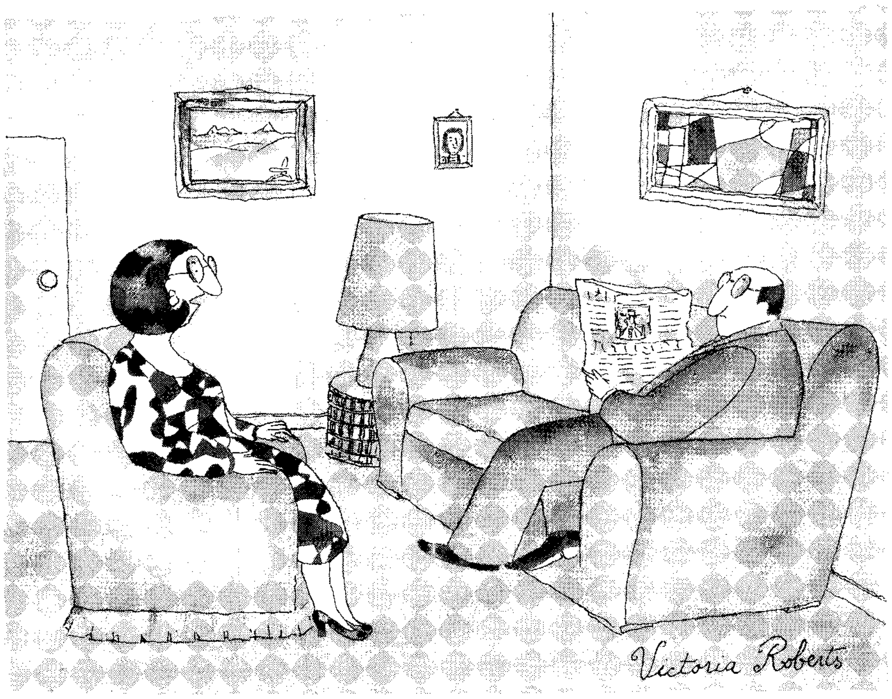
"The Big Funk," at the Public Theatre—I'm told that it may have closed by the time you read this—is the sort of play that leaves you marvelling at what some people think they can get away with. Written and directed by John Patrick Shanley, it has a cast consisting of Graham Beckel, Jayne Haynes, Skipp Sudduth, Jeanne Tripplehorn, and Jake Weber, and that's pretty much all you can say, because the play, which has classical allusions galore and purports to tell you the meaning of life, is so incoherent. There's a setting, all right ("Place: Here. Time: Now"), and characters (they're called Jill, Fifi, Omar, Austin, and Gregory). What's missing is a plot.

"The Big Funk," doubly subtitled "a casual play or talk around the Polis" (as though Shanley were afraid that someone, recognizing "The Big Funk" for what it is, might call it a poor excuse for theatre), begins with four of the five characters stepping out and introducing themselves. One, dressed like a Greek goddess, declares herself the villain of the piece. Another, dressed like a tightrope walker, tells us about her past. A third, who claims to be a knife-thrower and to be married to the woman dressed like a tightrope walker, tells us his problems. A fourth claims to be the hero of the story, and an argument about this ensues. All of which would be fine if one had never seen a play by Christopher Durang or heard of Pirandello. Actually, all of it would probably be fine, in spite of Pirandello and Durang, if there were only a story. Shanley has proved his gifts as a raconteur before now, but he's usually hung his self-consciously zany hand of dialogue and imagery on a definite structure—a play that has a moral ("Italian American Reconciliation"); a movie in which events in five different groups of lives converge in one place ("Five Corners"); a movie in which all the women are played by one actress ("Joe Versus the Volcano"). Some unifying element, in other words, has made one willing to put up with the forced whimsy of Shanley's style.

"Italian American Reconciliation," Shanley's last play, promised to teach the audience an important lesson about life, but when the lesson came it turned out to be pretty banal: that love is what it's all about. "The Big Funk" offers a lesson—that nudity is what it's all about—without a story. Instead, we get a series of sketches, most of which Shanley has written before: the one about two guys in a bar talking about Life; the one about the quaint young man seducing the difficult woman; the one about the wacky meal. There's a scene in which Mr. Sudduth—playing the fifth character, who never turns up again—smears Vaseline all over Miss Tripplehorn's face and hair. And then, as I say, there's the nudity that ends each act and is probably gratuitous—in the absence of a context, it's hard to tell. Still, the premise is clear: the characters are lunatics of various kinds, and they all have problems, just like us, and Shanley is going to explain it all for us—this indefinable malaise that besets everyone.

By now, though, we're tired of Shanley's lunatics and the wacky things they say and do, and now we have, in addition to Pirandello and Durang, "Twin Peaks" and "Cop Rock," in which characters do the kinds of surprising things that used to happen only in stage plays. Shanley's problem is that television has caught up with him, revealing how little he has to say. In "The Big Funk," there's a certain amount of talk about the possibility of God, happiness, and life after death, as characters pontificate and face off with each other. Individual lines or deliveries are occasionally funny, but nothing adds up. When a character refers to "the verities," there's something almost self-congratulatory about it. It's as though Shanley had gone from being our premier poet of singles anxiety to being a sort of thinking man's Andrew Lloyd Webber—providing the excuse for a lot of spectacle that will make members of the audience feel hip or sophisticated, the way certain musicals make audiences feel opulent.

The Public's production has lighting by Arden Fingerhut and costumes by Lindsay W. Davis and a set, by Nancy Winters, that works hard with mural, frieze, and motif to justify Mr. Shanley's references to fate and Agamemnon. The acting is all entertaining and authoritative, though Mr. Weber comes a little too close to Nicolas Cage in "Moonstruck" (which Mr. Shanley also wrote) for comfort. Miss Tripplehorn does some impressive spiritual mugging, and Mr. Beckel and Mr. Sudduth are masterly in delivering their set pieces. But the play soon begins to pall, possibly because the actors seem to be having so much more fun than the audience. —Mimi Kramer



*"I watch where I put my exclamation points."*

# MUSICAL EVENTS

## *Moral Tales Retold*

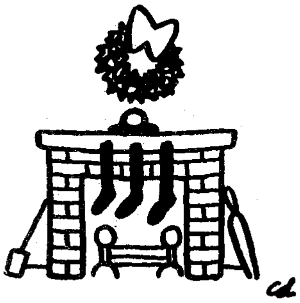
TWO operas by Siegfried Matthus, a German composer born in 1934, appeared in 1985: "Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke," after Rainer Maria Rilke's poem, in Dresden; and "Judith," after Hebbel's play, at the Berlin Comic Opera, where Matthus is resident composer. Both works have been much performed. Both have reached America: "Judith" was staged at Santa Fe this summer, and "The Lay of Cornet Christoph Rilke's Love and Death" was given three performances this month by the Manhattan School of Music. Matthus's success is easy to understand. He writes eloquently and gratefully for voices, and so effectively for instruments that flutists tend to ask whether he was trained as a flute player, while percussion players presume that he was once a percussionist. His harmonic language, based on unusually gapped octatonic scales, comprehends harsh dissonance and sweet concord. He chooses important subject matter and handles it with seriousness and dramatic flair. When the Manhattan School decided, many months ago, to mount "Cornet Rilke," it could not have known how newly urgent and timely the performance would prove to be. War is the subject of both "Judith" and "Cornet Rilke"—and, specifically, an individual's responsibility and behavior when engaged in destructive battle. In "Judith" (which I wrote about in August), the drama is as much psychological as political: Judith and Holofernes are not only two powerful, intricate personalities but also grand representatives of two hostile ideologies; the conflict is confused by the pious, patriotic heroine's sexual attraction to the potential conqueror. In "Cornet Rilke," the justness of the hero's cause is unargued, unquestioned; the enemy makes no appearance until, in the penultimate scene, the eighteen-year-old Cornet falls beneath the flash of scimitars. (The final scene is an epilogue, a year later, in which an old woman weeps.) Rilke's poem, written in 1899, is a fantasia on a seventeenth-century ancestor, Christoph Rilke von Langenau—imagined as a dashing young Cherubino gone to war—who died defending Europe from the Turks. A series of twenty-seven vignettes of military life tell of romantic companionship, tedium, weariness, memories of home, ambition, discipline. Through scenes of destruction the company comes to a castle, where revelry by night is followed by a tender interlude between the young Cornet and a mysterious, lovely Countess. Then storm, siege, fire. Seizing the banner, the Cornet runs through burning hallways, leaps to horse, and rides into the thick of the foe.

In a special, knapsack edition, "The Lay of Cornet Christoph Rilke's Love and Death" accompanied young Germans to the front in the 1914-18 war and inspired them with the romance and glory of dying for the Fatherland; in the 1939-45 war, it on occasion served a similar purpose. But there are other ways of reading it. Matthus, for example, has said, "I knew that many young men went to their deaths in the First and Second World Wars with the Cornet story in their knapsacks. A glorification of heroic death? I found nothing of that in the text. . . . I read the story quite differently: as the tragedy of a young man in a terrible war event, who conquers the crisis of puberty through the great love experience, and, in the rapture of his new-found love, runs blindly to his death." The opera was composed for the reopening of the Dresden Opera House, a great theatre that, like most of the great city and thousands of those who had gathered in it, was destroyed by Allied bombs. Many people both British and German are still scarred by their memories of February 13, 1945, the night of the Dresden Raid; Matthus calls it Germany's Hiroshima. He begins his Dresden opera with a setting of another Rilke poem, about a blazing theatre and the destruction of the audience, and then he frames the adventures of Cornet Rilke within a Dies Irae.

Matthus devised his own dramatic shaping of the poem, calling it an *Opernvision*, an "opera-vision." In one act, it lasts about ninety minutes. The role of the Cornet is shared by two mezzos: one gives voice to his direct speech, the other to his thoughts. The little French Marquis, his companion during the earlier scenes, is a baritone. The imposing General Spork is a bass; in the poem he appears only once and speaks only one word, but in the opera he recurs as the type of inflexible militarism. Two sopranos—one, again, as an inner voice—play the Countess. The narrative lines, with great skill, are assigned sometimes to soloists and sometimes to the chorus, and are sometimes not set at all but written into the score in the manner of stage directions. For the text of the "old sad song that at home the girls in the fields sing, in the

*"Merry Christmas to you!"*

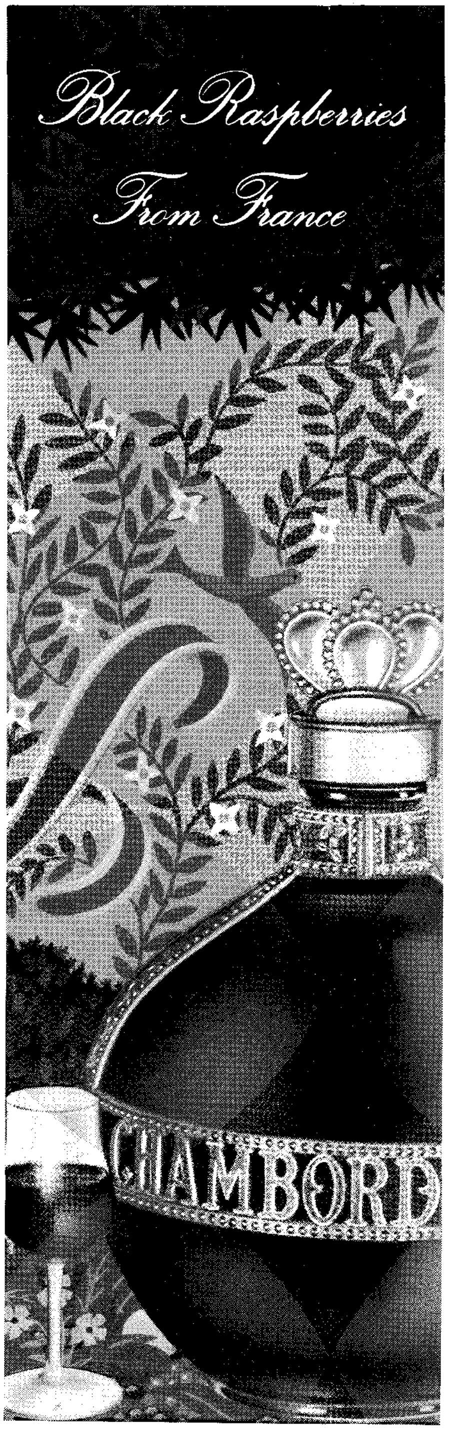
fall," which the Cornet, wakeful by a watchfire, remembers, Matthus turns to another Rilke poem (the song drifts in, on women's voices, as if from afar); also for the words of the love duet—a long stretch of rapturous, enchanted music for the two sopranos and the two mezzos. Warriors muster to "Trommeln und Pfeifen, Kriegrischer Klang," a song from Schiller's "Wallensteins Lager," which Verdi set in "La Forza del Destino" as "Lorche pifferi e tamburi."



The orchestra is just four flutes, two harps, a solo horn, an electric bass guitar, and three percussionists. Much of the time, "Cornet Rilke" is a chamber opera, lyrical and intimate. The flutes breathe romance; the harps ripple or, along with light percussion, touch in gentle accents; the guitar strums clopping hoofbeats; the horn sings moving, melancholy strains. (There are passages that suggest instrumental inspiration from Britten's "Rape of Lucretia.") But "Cornet Rilke" becomes a grand opera when bright military signals ring from the horn, the percussion mans a formidable battery, and the chorus is in full cry. The chorus, its role composed through an astonishing range of colors and textures, and in as many as sixteen parts, is in fact Matthus's main "orchestra"; in this respect, "Cornet Rilke" is a modern descendant of the old madrigal operas. I had advance doubts whether its music could be capably managed by any group less experienced than a crack professional choir, but they were confounded: the Manhattan student singers were secure, expert, expressive. The chorus master, Gary Wedow, and all the choristers meed the highest praise: Hayden Adams, Andrea Austin-Jones, Ruth Bailis, Tina Baker, Rebecca Barnes, James Bassi, William Burke, Scott Carlton, Karen Cholhan, Tracey Cooper, Stephanie Fracassa, Alfred Fredel, Steven Gaertner, Jeff Gardner, Martin Good, Randall Gregoire-Bess, Tamara Hardesty, Derek Harrison, Joanna Johnston, Inga Jonsdottir, Tammy Mann, Arn Prince, Carol Schaffer, Allison Scott, John Uehlein, Frances Veglia, Eric Von Bleicken, Andrea Wilkomirski, James Worley, and Anya Youngblood. Their words—the opera was sung in an English translation, by Bernard Jacobson—were uncommonly clear. Although but thirty strong, at climaxes they set ringing the John Brownlee Opera Theatre, a compact thousand-seat house.

The performance was (with the exception of a less than polished Marquis) distinguished, and on a fully professional level. The title role was played by Christine Abraham, who, the program told us, performed in the famous PepsiCo "Figaro" and "Don Giovanni" last year—a true statement so far as it goes, but the addition of the words "in the chorus" would have been seemly. (Many famous careers have been launched from choral ranks; Erich Kunz, Peter Pears, Janet Baker, Heather Harper, Thomas Allen, Philip Langridge, John Tomlinson, Rosalind Plowright began in the Glyndebourne chorus.) Miss Abraham was alert, attractive, variegated. As the Cornet's Inner Voice, an even more important role, Lisa Livingston sang sensitively and beautifully; one long solo was afflicted by the beat of heavy vibrato—probably in a deliberate, if misguided, attempt at "expressiveness," for elsewhere, at both performances that I heard, she was steady. The sopranos, Nina Warren as the Countess and Anoosh Barclay as her Inner Voice, were pleasing—the latter, in the higher role, especially so, with unforced, purely tuned, floating line. Charles Austin was a strong Spork.

Last year, I told of an Italian production of Matthus's opera which was enacted, as it were, by a band of war-weary soldiers returning from the Russian front, resting for the night in a ruined theatre. Real Italian soldiers from the local brigade took part in it, as extras. One of the company pulls from his pack a battered copy of the Rilke poem and starts to read it; the old theatre is stirred into life, and actions take shape; the soldiers recognize ideals that had inspired them before they encountered the realities of war. The Manhattan School had not invited real American troops stationed in New York to take part in its production (the stage was full enough as it was), but one could imagine their presence. The performance, which was potently di-



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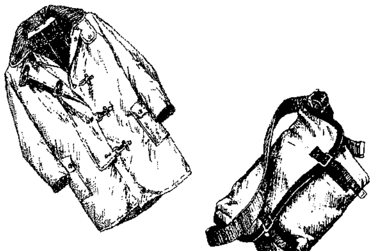

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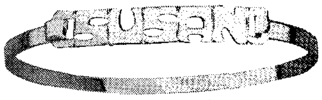

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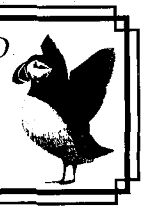

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rected by Linda Brovsky, began with a modern crowd exploring by flashlight a scene of war devastation. (The silent prelude went on a little too long, but the idea was fine.) Amid the rubble, the corpse of Cornet Christoph Rilke von Langenau was revealed; he rose to reënact the ambivalent myths of Rainer Maria Rilke's poem.

The composer leaves much to the imagination and invention of a director and designer. The final stage directions (I use the Norton translation) read:

> He is running a race with burning halls, through doors that press him close, red-hot, over stairs that scorch him, he breaks forth out of the raging pile. Upon his arms he carries the flag like a white, insensible woman. And he finds a horse, and it's like a cry: away over all, passing everything by, even his own men. And then the flag comes to itself again, and it has never been so kingly; and now they all see it, far in the van, and know the shining, helmetless man and know the flag.
>
> But, behold, it begins to glow, flings itself out and grows wide and red. Their flag is aflame in the enemy's midst, and they gallop after.
>
> Langenau is deep in the enemy, but all alone. Terror has ringed a space around him, and he halts, in the very middle, under the slowly dying flare of his flag. Slowly, almost reflectively, he gazes about him. There is much that is strange, motley before him. Gardens—he thinks and smiles. But then he feels that eyes are holding him and is aware of men and knows that these are the heathen dogs—and casts his horse into their midst.
>
> But, as he is now closed in on from behind, they are indeed gardens again, and the sixteen curved sabres that leap upon him, flash on flash, are a festival. A laughing fountain.

Of course, not *all* this could be literally represented on the Manhattan—or on any—stage, but the sense of it, through eight pages of very exciting music, was there. Miss Brovsky's actions and imagery, Miguel Romero's simple, well-planned designs, and Jane Reisman's dramatic lighting were precise, economical, and striking. David Gilbert's conducting was sure. The eleven instrumentalists—Sara Della Posta an outstanding solo horn—were excellent.

A GLYNDEBOURNE double bill three years ago, of Ravel's "L'Heure Espagnole" and "L'Enfant et les Sortilèges," seems to have aroused no great enthusiasm: *Opera* called Frank Corsaro's direction "trivial, flashy, and debasing" and Maurice Sendak's décor "flimsy, dislikably 'storybook.' " But the New York City Opera must have perceived more merit in the show: last month, it was re-created at the State Theatre for a run of ten performances, with alternating casts, in nine days. Both operas—each lasts a short hour, with not an unnecessary note or word—are exquisitely fashioned. "The Spanish Hour" (or "How Time Passes in Spain," or, as Ernest Newman once suggested, "The Immoral Hour") is amusing, and "The Child and the Enchantments" (or "The Spellbound Child"), which has a fine-grained libretto by Colette, is moving. And both works are musically beautiful. The City Opera performances were far from unbearable. Guido Ajmon[illegible] Marsan was a sensitive, even delicate, conductor, who never drowned the singers; there was some refined orchestral playing; and onstage there were a few remarkable performers. But Mr. Corsaro's direction was tiresome: it displayed, especially in "L'Enfant," his reluctance to deal with the work of composers and librettists until he has revised or rewritten it.

"L'Enfant" acquired a mimed prologue: the birthday party of Bébé's little sister, which he jealously does his best to spoil. It acquired Oedipal motivation for Bébé's bad behavior: Papa, added to Colette's cast, amorously took Maman away from Bébé in the opening scene; he and Maman doubled as Tomcat and Cat, making lascivious love while Bébé watched. Bébé was roughed up in the garden not by the creatures he had mistreated but by human beings—the party guests—mistreating him. He found redemption by binding up not the Squirrel's wounded paw but the *patte* of his little sister, who had also played the Dragonfly that he caught and pinned. (Squirrel was a flapper in furs and a cloche hat, wielding a long cigarette holder.) At the close of the garden scene, Cat and Tomcat were left alone with Bébé; she shooed her husband away and, at the choral cry of "Maman," took off her cat mask to become a loving Maman after all. Colette and Ravel's clear-eyed, wise, moral fable was invaded by the whine of a child—or grown man—who lays the blame for his bad behavior and his unhappiness upon those who brought him up; it was drawn closer to the Knussen-Sendak-Corsaro opera "Where the Wild Things Are." The décor was a mixture of ingenious onstage invention and wobbly animated projections onto a front gauze that divided the performers from the audience. When visual representation and voices were separated—as with the Clock, the Teapot, the Chinese Cup, the Fire—the performance lost immediacy. And the imagery was often—especially in the pedestalled bust of Ravel that decks the garden—closer to a comic book than to the elegant score. Virginia Sublett was a sweetly tuneful Nightingale, true and pure into the highest reaches. Robert Orth was a live Tomcat. Both Enfants were attractive—Julia Parks slightly the better actor, but unboyish in her vibrato.

"L'Heure Espagnole" was played before a huge, stage-spanning clock; the characters of the drama entered as automatons along a mechanical track. Well, it was a harmless fancy: one could avert one's eyes and listen to the music, and once the singers stepped off the track they started to act. Anna Steiger, the second-cast Concepcion, was the best actress, the happiest singer, the liveliest projector of all. She commanded the text and could play with it. Vivaciously and merrily sexy, she had the vocal colors and the range of the role. Kathryn Gamberoni, her alternate, was more constrained; although she has a pretty presence, her young voice sounded tired in the upper reaches, unable to deliver a high "é" vowel without impurity. Jonathan Green, the first-cast Torquemada (and Arithmetic and the Frog in both "Enfant" casts), was the outstanding male performer. He sang as if he had studied Hugues Cuénod with profit; everything told. Miss Steiger and Mr. Green made a case for performance in the original language; almost everyone else's French sounded far back in the mouth, not out on the lips. Kevin Anderson was the more elegant and stylish Gonzalve; Michael Rees Davis had more vocal resource but small feeling for line. Neither Ramiro, Mr. Orth or Richard Byrne, radiated simple, strong-shouldered young masculinity. Mr. Byrne had evidently overlooked Ravel's request for "*speaking* rather than *singing* . . . i.e., almost all the time the *quasi-parlando* of Italian opera-buffa recitative," but there was promise in his warm, full tones. Jan Opalach, always a sonorous, sometimes a pompous, performer, was a natural for—and an entertaining—Don Inigo Gomez.

—ANDREW PORTER

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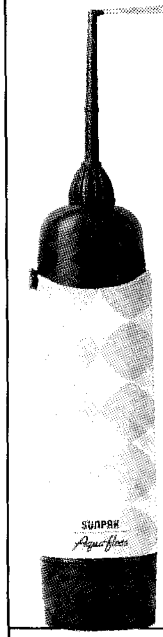

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# LETTER FROM JERUSALEM

December 13

THERE was a time, not so long ago, when people here would say, "Things are likely to get worse before they get better," implying that things really would get better and there would be peace. The other day, while I was standing in line at a local school to be issued a gas mask—the government began issuing gas masks when Iraq renewed threats to "burn" Israel—I heard a man behind me tell his wife, "Nowadays, things here go only from worse to worst." Under Saddam Hussein's threats to exterminate Israel with chemical and biological weapons, everyday life here is grim. For some time, the conventional wisdom in Israel has been that the Arab-Israeli conflict no longer lends itself to a "military" solution. In the absence of any discernible effort to negotiate a political settlement, many people here now have a sinking feeling of being at the mercy of blind forces.

There is no strong political center at the moment, and the fringes are flowing into the resultant vacuum. The Palestinian uprising on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip—now entering its fourth bloody year—seems to be controlled more and more by Muslim fanatics. And intellectuals on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem who were until very recently known for their moderation—they would frequent international seminars on peacemaking and talk of the need to arrive at a "historic compromise" with Israel—have now allied themselves with Saddam Hussein, who they say is fighting the haves in the interest of the have-nots. Pictures of Saddam Hussein are all over Nablus, Ramallah, and East Jerusalem. Palestinian newspapers in East Jerusalem speak not of an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait but of the "deployment" of Iraqi forces there. I asked a Palestinian journalist in East Jerusalem how he thought this identification with Iraq could help the cause of Palestinian self-determination. He said, "Most probably, it will do no good at all. It may even cause harm. But Israel refuses to talk to us and has left us no other choice."

In Israel, too, events drift and get out of hand. National policy now often seems governed not by sovereign will but by impulse, by mood, by the lowest common denominator, and by what the late Israeli historian Jacob Talmon called the "obsessive desires" of fanatics on the extreme right. Talmon used to warn that such desires, which he said constituted a departure from Freud's "reality principle," were rampant in Israeli public life. Henry Kissinger once complained that Israel had no foreign policy, only domestic policy. The predominance of petty local politics over foreign-policy considerations, always a fact of life here, has never been so noticeable. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's right-wing coalition is narrow and often seems to be manipulated by extremists. During the past year, Shamir has felt obliged to scuttle his own peace plan, which called for elections in the occupied territories and for Israeli-Palestinian talks. In his statements in recent months advocating an Israel that reaches "from the Jordan to the sea," and in his refusal to promise unequivocally that new immigrants from the Soviet Union would not be settled in the occupied territories, Shamir has seemed to be precipitating, almost deliberately, a crisis with the United States: to offend President Bush or Secretary of State James Baker appears easier and less risky, in the short run, than offending the half-dozen fundamentalist Knesset members who make up his narrow parliamentary majority.

The feeling of being beset by blind forces is especially strong in the mixed city of Jerusalem, where the effects of prolonged terror and repression have

*"And this is Brie."*

caused the few vestiges of Palestinian-Israeli coexistence to break down almost completely. Hardly a day passes in the "holy city" without a riot or a stoning, without cars being torched or firebombs thrown, without attempted lynchings or the stabbing of an Israeli by a Palestinian (or vice versa). After each incident, municipal cleaning machines, marked "CITY OF PEACE" in three languages, appear on the scene to wash blood from the streets in time for the next group of pious pilgrims to pass by, fingering their rosaries and muttering solemn prayers.

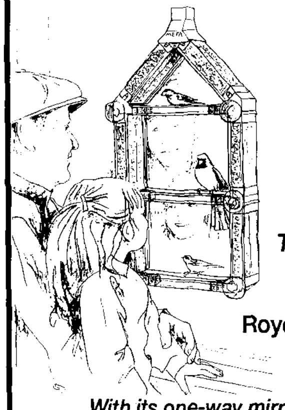
The combination of nationalism and religion in Jerusalem—much like that in Cyprus or in Northern Ireland—now includes threats and counter-threats of nuclear or biological Armageddons. In the city's spooky clutter of holy places sacred to more than one religion, plots and counterplots are being worked out, and there is no telling where the next blow will fall. Housefronts in the Old City are smeared with graffiti screaming "Death to Arabs" or "Allah Akbar—Slaughter the Jews." Others hail "Saddam Hussein the Great Arab." Clouds of tear gas hang overhead between towers and domes in what used to be called "Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest."

THE Palestinian uprising has hit the Palestinian quarters of Jerusalem as hard as it has hit cities in the occupied West Bank, and perhaps harder. Despite overwhelming displays of force by riot police and special troops, the violence now often spills across the old demarcation line, into Israeli residential areas. Panic breeds panic, and each outrage generates another one.

This proliferation was vividly shown in the tragic sequence of events that began in October, with the announcement by a minuscule group of Jewish fanatics and publicity hunters that they intended to lay the cornerstone for the "Third Temple" within the Haram al-Sharif, which is the Muslims' sacred enclosure on Moriah, the ancient Jewish Temple Mount. (Of the Second Temple, only the Western Wall now remains; the rest was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.) This handful of fanatics had tried the same stunt several times before, and had always been stopped by the police and prevented from entering the *haram*. They were stopped again, but this time a crowd of about three thousand Muslims, who had gathered in the *haram* to listen to incendiary speeches by the imams and were waving Palestinian flags and chanting slogans, began to throw stones down upon Jewish worshippers at the Western Wall, below. Police officers on the spot panicked; they may also have been affected by considerations of tribal vanity and "face." They made a clumsy attempt to storm the *haram* and failed. A second attempt was accompanied by indiscriminate firing of automatic weapons. Seventeen Muslims were shot dead, and more than a hundred were wounded.

The political fallout from the killings in the *haram* was severe. For the first time since 1982, the United States joined in two consecutive condemnations of Israel in the United Nations Security Council. The Jordanian border, which had been quiet for many years, with trade and tourists going back and forth, flared up, with sporadic shooting and attempts at armed infiltration. Jordan was said to be gripped by a "fundamentalist fever" as a result of both the Temple Mount killings and the Gulf crisis. Several of the armed infiltrators crossing the border with religious amulets and copies of the Koran were discovered to be regular Jordanian National Guardsmen determined to take private revenge for the massacre in the *haram*. Israeli intelligence experts concluded that the Jordanian government was finding it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to control fundamentalist elements within its own Army. There was talk, suddenly, of Jordan's becoming "another Lebanon," and of Israel's need to seize more land in the east, across the Jordanian border, to create a new "security zone," similar to the zone it now holds in the north across its border with Lebanon.

On the local scene, the massacre gave rise to even greater concern. Almost every other day, week after week, some young Palestinian ran amok in the streets here with a kitchen knife in his hand, wounding or killing Israelis—not only security personnel but civilians, including children. The stabbings were followed in several cases by savage riots: infuriated Israelis, hungry for revenge, roamed the streets in search of Arabs to beat up and possibly kill. The violent underside of Israeli life, which the political establishment has tended



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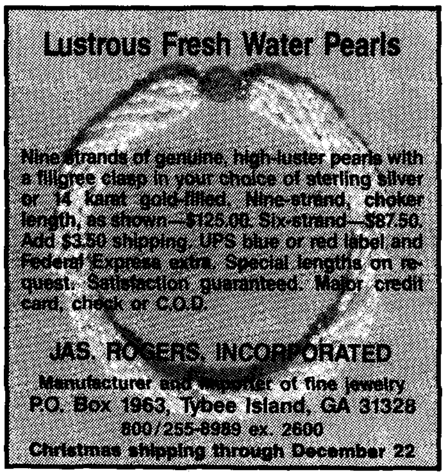

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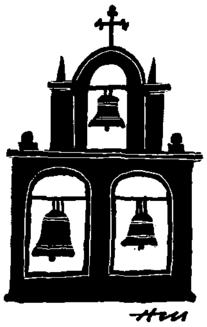
to ignore or belittle—even though, on occasion, it has exploited it electorally—came into sharp view. The quasi-official funeral, in Jerusalem, of Meir Kahane, who was murdered in New York last month, magnified it for all the world to see. In his lifetime, Kahane never attracted more than two or three hundred people to one of his meetings here. His funeral was attended by a crowd estimated at between fifteen and twenty thousand. Some of them called for avenging Kahane's death with "rivers of Arab blood." Some cried "Leftist Jews will also have to die!" and "Let's go from here to liberate the Temple Mount!" After the funeral, thousands of mourners rampaged throughout the night, beating up Arabs wherever they could find them. A Jerusalem woman I know—of German-Jewish origin—who witnessed the riot said she had never imagined there was so much hatred in the community. She said it reminded her of the *Volkswut* that produced the infamous *Kristallnacht* in Germany, on November 9, 1938. (Oddly, the riot in Jerusalem took place on the eve of the fifty-second anniversary of that awful night.) Later the same night, the mob tried to storm Television House, the studios of the government-run Israeli television. Rioters yelled that Israeli television news was controlled by the P.L.O. I heard one of them shout "Kill the Arabs!" and another "Gas them! Gas them! As they gassed Jews during the Holocaust!" Four Arabs and four policemen were wounded, one seriously.



Kahane's politics were an amalgam of racism, pornography, and religion. His slogan was "I say what others think." He would show up at meetings accompanied by a young thug armed with an automatic gun and said to be Trotsky's great-grandson, and he spread fear and hatred wherever he went. Some years ago, Kahane was suspected of planning to blow up the mosques on the Temple Mount and was placed under administrative detention for six months. His rhetoric completely dehumanized all Arabs; he saw them as the Nazis had seen the Jews—as "a cancer," as "rats" and "viruses" to be mercilessly crushed. The Israeli-Arab struggle was between the chosen people and an inferior people. Liberal Jews, however, were "filthy traitors." He demanded heavy jail sentences for Arabs who defiled Jewish blood by having sexual intercourse with Jews. The funeral of this man was attended by two Cabinet Ministers and two Deputy Ministers and by the Chief Sephardic Rabbi, who urged the mourners to "follow in Kahane's ways." (The same Chief Rabbi some years ago pronounced himself in favor of evicting "the infidels" from the Temple Mount.) The Knesset, which had once passed a law making it impossible for Kahane to run for office, because of his racism, commemorated his death. He was criticized by some members but hailed by others as a "saint"—like Anne Frank—who had been killed only because he was Jewish. At the end of the commemoration, the Speaker asked everyone to stand up. Thirty Knesset members (out of a hundred and twenty) stood up to honor Kahane's memory in a moment of silence. Kahane did not invent Kahanism. Tom Segev, a columnist for the newspaper *Ha'aretz*, wrote after the funeral that there has always been a fringe element of Kahanism in Zionism, as there is an element of racism in any nationalism. Kahane's death showed that Kahanism was alive and growing stronger.

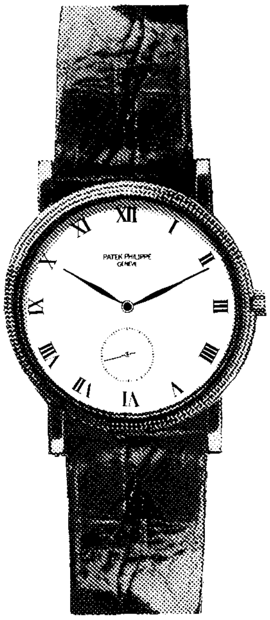
The events that shook Bak'a, a middle-class residential quarter in South Jerusalem, just two weeks after the killings in the *haram* were a case in point. A young Arab construction worker employed by an Israeli contractor at a nearby building site suddenly started running through the quiet, tree-lined streets yelling "Allah Akbar!" and he stabbed a young woman—a soldier in the Israeli Army—and two men to death. He was taking revenge for the desecration of the *haram*, he said later. He told the court where he was charged with murder that a bearded old man clad in white had appeared to him in a dream and ordered him to become a martyr for Allah. Bak'a represents a cross-section of Jerusalem. In the early fifties, a few hundred poor immigrants from Morocco and Iraq, and refugees from the ancient Jewish quarter of the Old City (at that time under Jordanian occupation), settled there in abandoned Arab houses and in new public apartment buildings. More affluent people have since settled in Bak'a, most of them of European origin—university people, professionals, successful young businessmen, Western immigrants. Bak'a had long been considered a model community, where people of different income levels and ethnic groups showed that they could successfully coöperate in local self-government and in joint social and educational projects. Barely fifteen minutes after the stabbings, about a hundred of the residents began to riot; they stoned passing cars and also the Bak'a home of a well-known Peace Now activist—a physics professor at the Hebrew University, whom the rioters accused of hiding the murderer in his living room, even though the murderer was at that moment lying wounded in the street. The rioters then turned against the police, yelling "Death to Arabs!" (and, incidentally, "Death to the media!" and "Death to all leftist Arab-loving Jews!"). The common assumption that Israelis of European origin are doves and go to Peace Now demonstrations and vote for Labor while those of Afro-Asian origin are hawks and vote for Likud is, of course, a stereotype; it has gained so much credence because it contains a measure of truth. After the riot, a second Hebrew University professor, also a resident of Bak'a, was quoted in the press as saying, "I am scared. I saw for the first time that a lynching is possible here."

During the next two weeks, there were eleven stabbings by Arabs in Jerusalem—all alleged to be in revenge for the massacre in the *haram*—and four riots by Jews. The riots were directed as much against Israeli moderates and against media people of all political shades—who were said to rejoice each time they could write about or photograph a dead Jew—as against Arabs.

A few days after the killings in Bak'a, I attended a memorial meeting there. Some five hundred people crowded into an open square outside the local elementary school. Under a large sign saying "Death to Arabs," a rabbi said a prayer in which he invoked God's vengeance on the wicked for the innocent blood spilled. Professor Yuval Ne'eman, the Minister of Science and Technology in Shamir's government, demanded the introduction of the death penalty; any Arab who threw one stone at a Jew, he said, should be expelled immediately from the country, together with his entire family, and their home destroyed or turned over to new Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union. Entire Arab villages must be "erased," he said, if one of the inhabitants was engaged in terrorist activity. Approximately a third of the audience applauded these words, and the rest listened in silence. A Likud member of the Knesset spoke next, and accused the government of bending to pressure from the United States. He complained that the government was "abandoning the Jewish population" to Palestinian terror, and said that stronger measures were needed.

The city now often resembles an armed camp. The Israeli sector and the Palestinian sector in the "united" city are held together by brute force alone. Business centers, pedestrian zones, and the main squares in both parts of the city swarm with heavily armed special troops at all hours of the day. The Palestinian sector is patrolled by armored troop carriers and soldiers wearing steel helmets, and flak jackets that are bulletproof and knifeproof. They walk in twos and threes through the streets there, with their walkie-talkies, their truncheons, their M-16 rifles, looking self-conscious, a bit clumsy, perspiring in the sun. It is difficult to say who is more afraid, they or the Palestinians. Many old houses in Jerusalem have water tanks on their roofs, left over from the days of the British mandate, when the water supply was irregular and every household maintained a reservoir against possible shortages. Last month's bills from the city water department included a printed notice warning people to make sure that the tanks were tightly closed, to guard against attempts to poison the water.

You feel as though you were inhabiting two different worlds. One moment, you seem to be in some macabre science-fiction world, with talk of high-tech warfare—Iraqi threats and Israeli counterthreats of chemical, biological, or possibly nuclear extinction—and the next moment you are back in the tribal wars of times gone by, waged with sticks and stones and knives and poisoned water. Even a short while ago, nobody in his right mind would have imagined that things could deteriorate to this extent. The intense hatred is new, and its effects on public morale are considerable. The generations of young Israelis who went to war in the past were grim and determined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but without hatred. Now there is hatred, and disdain, too, and the kind of "war racism" that is apparent when bystanders trying to stop a beating yell at the assailants, "He is not an Arab—don't hit him." In the past, morale here was vigorous and full of optimism. Israel was a country, perhaps the only one, where people would say in wartime, "I am lucky to be here." Today, the country is polarized as never before. On the one hand, there are the religious and nationalist fanatics, in whose eyes even Prime Minister Shamir is a weakling, subservient to the Americans; on the other hand, many people have a panicky feeling that Shamir may be leading the country not only to a rift with the United States but possibly to yet another terrible war.

SHAMIR turned seventy-five a few weeks ago. On that occasion, he said, in a rare personal interview, that throughout his long and stormy life as an underground leader before 1948 and, later, as a Mossad official and as a politician, he had always put his trust in "goddess luck." She had rarely let him down, he implied. He is a man of few words and short, simple sentences, and when he speaks of the *land*, the *homeland*, in his grinding bass voice, the deep, almost Wagnerian sound resonates through his small frame. His unassuming figure combines with a pair of hard gray eyes to convey an impression of bullish determination and tenacity. Immobilism in diplomacy has been the hallmark of his tenure as Prime Minister, but at the price of rekindling again and again the dying fires of the *intifada* and increasing Israel's international isolation. He continues to say that Israel needs territory for reasons of defense and to absorb an expected annual influx of at least two hundred thousand newcomers from the Soviet Union. He will not yield a single centimetre of land, "not even for what they call peace," and insists that "the land is ours and only ours" and the peace "they" offer is not peace but a fraud. A Palestinian state on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip would be the beginning of the end of the Israeli state, a first step toward its dismemberment, he says.

Local and foreign character analysts have long speculated on Shamir's complicated makeup. He may be a *simplificateur terrible* or a shrewd judge of the prevailing power balance; in any case, in the eyes of political observers here and abroad Shamir's blunt style exemplifies the lack of imagination—some say mediocrity—that has marked Israeli politics in recent years. From Ben-Gurion to Golda Meir to Menachem Begin, Israel has never had such an uninspired, and uninspiring, leader. Begin, Shamir's predecessor as Party leader and Prime Minister, was a man of vivid historical imagination, who devoured history books and biographies of great men. He was sometimes swayed by speculations about what future historians would write of him. Shamir is not. He has few intellectual interests. As far as is known, he reads only newspapers and intelligence reports. Begin possessed an oversized ego. Several foreign statesmen, including President Bush, are said to have made attempts to massage Shamir's ego, but Shamir is often said to have no ego. He is being accused now of exposing Israel's relations with the United States to unnecessary strain; he rejected that accusation recently by pointing out in conversation with a visitor that the amount of American material aid to Israel is growing all the time. Statesmen are supposed to follow long-term strategies as well as short-term strategies, but nothing is known of Shamir's long-term strategy—if he has one—vis-à-vis the Palestinians. In his birthday interview he confessed an admiration for the courage and will power of Mao Zedong. He recalled that as a young man in Poland before the Second World War he had a weakness for the romantic Polish nationalists and freedom fighters of the nineteenth century: they realized their national aspirations. "I recited by heart entire poems by Adam Mickiewicz," he said. The interviewer did not ask him how and where the Palestinian people might one day realize their national aspirations. These are not likely to disappear even if millions of Soviet Jews migrate to Israel in the next few years. Some people here speculate that Shamir hopes that the days of King Hussein on the throne of Jordan are numbered (one of the King's private planes is said to be standing by at the Amman airport for takeoff at a moment's notice). There is a Palestinian majority in Jordan, and if the King falls the Palestinians could take over, with Yasir Arafat as Jordan's President. Perhaps Shamir expects to negotiate a compromise set-

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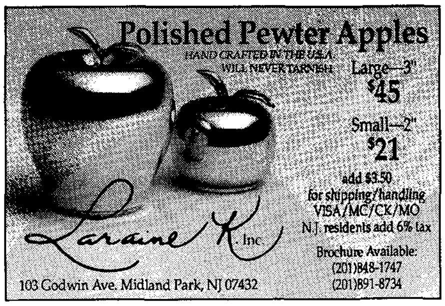

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tlement with Arafat there. But these are mere speculations. I once asked one of Shamir's aides if Shamir really believed that the Palestinians would be forever content to live as disenfranchised citizens in a Jewish state. The aide said, "No, he doesn't. He wants to leave this thorny problem to his successors. Otherwise they will be bored."

SHAMIR recently had a long talk with President Bush in Washington. He was said to be concerned that after the resolution of the current Gulf crisis the United States, in order to consolidate its new strategic partnership with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, would force Israel out of the West Bank. The opposition in Israel may be praying for that outcome. Alarming as an imposed Arab-Israeli settlement looks to the advocates of Likud, it could turn out to be less of a danger to Israel than the present threat from an undefeated Saddam Hussein.

Israel is complying with a request by the United States to keep an uncharacteristically low profile until the situation in the Gulf is resolved. The reason for this request is the desire of the United States to keep Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia in line; they might quit the anti-Iraq coalition if Israel belonged to it, too. Behind the scenes, however, diplomatic exchanges between Washington and Jerusalem have been tense, if not acerbic; they have become less so as a result of Shamir's meeting with Bush. One issue that has fuelled much public discussion here is whether or not there is military coördination between Israel and the United States. There have been so many speculations—and so many leaks—on this subject that it is now a major item of public information, or disinformation, in the psychological warfare between the parties. According to some reports, there is so little coördination with the United States that Israel is ready to mount a preventive attack on Iraq without even giving the United States any warning; according to others, coördination is so extensive that Israel has agreed to absorb an Iraqi first blow passively, just to allay any suspicion on the part of Syria or Saudi Arabia that Israel provoked a Gulf war. Israel has, in effect, become a hostage of Saddam Hussein's. In April, months before Iraq invaded Kuwait, Hussein had threatened to wipe out "half of Israel" if Israel attacked Iraq. After the invasion, he announced that he would attack Israel if America attacked him, or even if the economic sanctions began to hurt.

Israel has answered Hussein's threats with dire warnings of its own. Not a week has passed since the beginning of the Gulf crisis without such warnings by Shamir or by Defense Minister Moshe Arens. It has often been thought that Israel is keeping a nuclear arsenal at the ready. Shamir has said on more than one occasion that if Iraq attacked Israel the price Israel would make Iraq pay would be *ayom wenora*, or "terrible and dreadful"—words that have been understood as a veiled threat of nuclear retaliation. Shamir has repeated them so often that one local expert on nuclear strategy, Professor Yair Evron, of Tel Aviv University, has warned that such utterances by the Prime Minister might actually "legitimatize" the use of nuclear weapons.

In the weeks following the invasion of Kuwait, Shamir's warnings were thought to be intended mainly for domestic consumption, to calm the local population. "It now seems they are carefully premeditated and are said with cold dispassion," Ze'ev Schiff, the military editor of *Ha'aretz*, wrote last month. "I suggest that Shamir's words be taken with utmost seriousness. . . . His government, more than any former Israeli government, is unlikely to ignore any assault. The present Shamir government is more extremist than the Begin government that invaded Lebanon. . . . [It] tends to take extremist positions, to react strongly and to pay less attention to the consequences."

Uzi Benziman, a columnist in the same paper, wrote that under previous administrations a special committee of "wise men" had advised the government on such issues; it had coined the well-known ambiguous formula "Israel would not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons in the area." Benziman wondered whether this was still Israel's position. He asked, "Who are the wise men that are advising Shamir? Declarations of an escalating nature, by the Prime Minister, connoting a possible use of nuclear weapons—have they been carefully thought out? And to what end?" It was not clear whether an advisory committee on nuclear strategy still existed. Shamir's aides were not answering questions on this issue.

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# THE SKY LINE

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Gordon Bunshaft died in August, at the age of eighty-one. In 1988, he was awarded the Pritzker Prize in architecture jointly with Oscar Niemeyer, of Brazil, his slightly older contemporary. Bunshaft had long coveted the prize and had not been ashamed to campaign for it, though campaigning was foreign to his nature. Most successful American architects have been debonair, gregarious spellbinders. (One thinks of, among the dead, Hunt, Burnham, White, and Wright, and, among the living, Philip Johnson, I. M. Pei, and Richard Meier, all three of whom happen to be Pritzker laureates.) Bunshaft was of a different stamp, being so grumpily taciturn that close friends seeking to provide a kindly description of him would often fall back upon the adjective "difficult." I was an acquaintance of Bunshaft's, if not a friend, and on the one or two occasions when I was bold enough to praise his work to his face I got the impression that I was interrupting a train of thought that was of higher value to him than any opinion, whether favorable or unfavorable, I might happen to hold of his handiwork. Like an arrow uncannily reversing direction in mid-flight, the compliment I was engaged in paying Bunshaft became a rebuke to me.

A few years ago, when I was serving as the secretary of the Pritzker Prize Jury, the telephone at the Pritzker office rang and a gruff voice—unmistakably Bunshaft's—asked how nominations for the prize were made. I replied that anyone could make such a nomination, adding that often friends and admirers of an architect would write in to propose him. Armed with this information, Bunshaft promptly had himself nominated. He was right to do so. Why should any appropriate recognition have been denied him in his old age, especially when he was suffering from what he perceived to be two separate injustices—first, that of having had to step down as the senior design partner in the New York office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, on the occasion of his reaching the firm's obligatory retirement age of sixty-five, and, second, that of being left behind by architectural fashion? For a time in the fifties and sixties, he and his colleagues at S.O.M. were the leaders in the taut, sharp-edged, steel-and-glass Miesian style that was then all the rage in corporate circles, and that Bunshaft himself employed (to the accompaniment of much public praise) in his designs for 9 West Fifty-seventh Street, Lever House, and the Marine Midland Building, all in New York City; the addition to the Albright-Knox Gallery of Art, in Buffalo (Bunshaft's home town); and the Connecticut General Life Insurance Company Office Building, in Bloomfield, Connecticut.

*"Oh, yeah, tough guy? Well, maybe this is the night I mop up the floor with you."*

I speak of Bunshaft's style as having been all the rage, but this isn't to imply that it wasn't of authentic value. To be taken up by fashion is nearly always an accident, not unlike being struck by lightning, and serious art and trashy art may both find themselves beneficiaries of such an accident without being in the least altered by it. When the work of a serious artist who has become fashionable undergoes a subsequent falling off in quality, we are quick to assume that it is his fashionableness that has done him in. Maybe yes and maybe no; too many factors enter into the production of works of art, especially over a lifetime, for anyone to be sure what part the Grand Opposites—health, sickness; wealth, poverty; fame, obscurity—play in an artist's career. It is certain that Bunshaft became fashionable, and it is certain also that the character of his work changed during the period in which he was fashionable. In the eyes of some critics, the change was plainly for the worse. But I doubt whether the change was related to Bunshaft's fame. He was a tough-minded man, contemptuous of much of the culture in which he and his firm flourished, and if that culture after a time chose to dismiss his style of architectural design his disappointment is more likely to have sprung from what he took to be a betrayal of the principles upon which the practice of architecture should be based than upon anything as personal and trivial as a bruised ego.

I suspect, also, that Bunshaft must have seen the betrayal as having been committed not only by a majority of his colleagues in the profession but by some of his immediate colleagues as well. For in the seventies and eighties the New York office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, like other offices of the firm, in other cities, at other times, underwent an internal revolution that pointed it in two very different directions. The first led to a somewhat modified version of its usual Miesian style (an example of which is the recently completed greeny-gray glass-and-steel skyscraper in Long Island City that was commissioned by Citicorp), and the second followed the newly chic backward-looking, historicist style, which in pretending to draw upon the past ends by parodying it. And a parody of

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the past is almost certain to reveal a lack of conviction on the part of the parodist: clever as he may be, his heart is not wholly in what he is doing—he is making a joke about the past at the very moment that he claims to be honoring it. No matter how skillful in execution, parody is all too often the homage that inferior talents pay to their betters.

Worldwide Plaza, which occupies the entire block bounded by Forty-ninth and Fiftieth Streets and Eighth and Ninth Avenues, and which is credited to one of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's senior design partners, David Childs, is in the firm's second, non-Miesian, non-Bunshaftian vein. It is an exercise in historicism on a gigantic scale. A chunky, brick-clad office tower, a hundred and sixty-five feet wide on each side, rises above Eighth Avenue from a block-long three-story base to a height of seven hundred and seventy feet, or forty-seven stories. The pyramidal top of the tower, itself several stories high, is almost entirely sheathed in copper. Its tip is made of glass, and at night, when the tip is illuminated, its glow can be seen for miles around. Behind the tower is a sizable paved plaza, sloping down in baroque curves to accommodate the change in grade between Fiftieth Street and Forty-ninth Street, and planted with a spreading grove of plane trees. Two small brick pavilions in the plaza contain stairs that lead down to a complex of six movie theatres—auditoriums so unexpectedly lofty that one tends to forget how far into the bedrock of New York one has descended. In the middle of the plaza is a fountain adorned with bronze figures. It would be kind to call the fountain baroque; in truth it is only bizarre.

From the west side of the plaza rises another tower, which, compared with its forty-seven-story-high companion, at 825 Eighth Avenue, strikes one at first glance as diminutive. In fact, it is thirty-eight stories high, but because it contains apartments, and not offices, its ceilings are characteristically low, and it is only a little more than half as high as its big brother. The buildings that complete the plaza ensemble, facing the side streets and Ninth Avenue, are but five stories high and contain small retail shops and imitation row houses, with doorways opening directly onto the street. Plainly, the intention here

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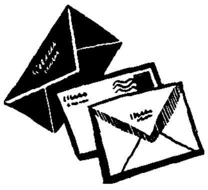
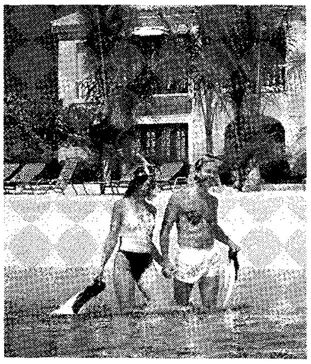
was to accommodate the low-roofed domestic scale of Ninth Avenue in the Forties—the so-called Clinton district, which consists largely of nineteenth-century brownstones and brick tenements, with restaurants, bars, and grocery stores at street level and cheap apartments on the floors above.

Before construction began, the S.O.M. office had worked up a variety of proposals, some of which, though they were legally permissible, would have crammed the site so grotesquely full of linked structures that the entire city would have been outraged. Yet even as it is—occupying a good deal less built-up space than the zoning laws entitle it to "as of right"—the project remains far too big. Its size is a consequence of what the money men call "numbers"—that is, the dollars-and-cents calculations that are the basis of all real-estate development and are nearly always the natural enemy of an architect's ambition to create structures that are pleasing to the eye. In order to make money, Worldwide Plaza had to be laid out on a scale radically unsuited to the neighborhood; otherwise, the investors in the project wouldn't have considered it worth the effort, and the site would have remained a parking lot. (Before it was a parking lot, it was occupied by the second Madison Square Garden, remote in every sense from Stanford White's original Madison Square Garden, of 1890. Few architects, however idealistic, are apt to refuse on artistic grounds a commission worth many millions of dollars; they fall back upon certain cosmetic tricks, calculated to mitigate the visual unease that sky-erasing, sunlight-obliterating mega-buildings prompt in us. Childs and his team attempted to reduce the bulk of the 825 Eighth Avenue building by chamfering its corners, by limiting the number of its window openings, by varying the textures and colors of its brick cladding, and by employing at intervals triangular bricks that, projecting from the surface of the building, provide a number of supposedly "slimming" vertical shadow lines. To my mind, these devices all fail, not least because they call attention to the reasons that made them necessary.



Not only is Worldwide Plaza too big; it also suffers from a defect that its designers and builders must have assumed would be seen as a virtue, and that is the cool reasonableness with which the plan has been thought through: every square foot of its four acres is put to use. And yet the effect produced is that of an alien presence in the streetscape of New York. Its very tidiness seems unfriendly, and perhaps adversarial; passing it, we quicken our steps in order to immerse ourselves again in the ragamuffin hurly-burly of Ninth Avenue.

Childs and his colleagues might well protest that the tidiness of plan I disparage at Worldwide Plaza is universally praised in Rockefeller Center. But Rockefeller Center is the happy consequence of several accidents that had little to do with its architecture, and were even seen at first as hardships that had to be overcome. For example, the Center is at its best and most beguiling along its Fifth Avenue frontage, where it consists of buildings that are only a few stories high; their height was limited, perhaps in deference to a tradition that no building near St. Patrick's Cathedral should exceed the height of its spires. A bronze Atlas holds up the world in a modest forecourt directly across from the entrance to the cathedral; a block to the south, the channel gardens, bordered by shops, drop gently from Fifth Avenue to the skating rink, which, presided over by the gilded image of fire-bringing Prometheus, serves as the heart of the Center. But the rink, far from having been a feature of the original plans for the Center, was an improvised afterthought. The builders intended the channel gardens to descend to an open plaza that would lead, through an elaborate entranceway, into the subterranean shopping arcades of the RCA Building; the arcades, in turn, would provide access to a brand-new Sixth Avenue subway, taking the place of the sooty old Sixth Avenue Elevated. But when the Center was under construction the long-planned subway was still only a blueprint, and the Center was obliged for the time being to turn its back on the depressing squalor of Sixth Avenue. The rink was a crowd-pleasing stopgap, inexpensive to build and easy to remove. The RCA Building (now the General Electric Building) is situated far from Fifth Avenue and takes care to present a façade that is exceptionally modest in comparison with its height and with its broad north and south



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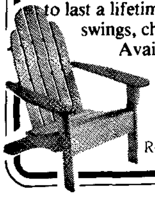

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façades; from Fifth Avenue it amounts to highly successful trompe-l'oeil, its bulk seemingly reduced to the breadth of a knife blade. Worldwide Plaza places *its* vast bulk where it is bound to seem most excessive—smack-dab on Eighth Avenue—and no fiddling with details can make it seem less overbearing than it actually is.

Nor is it only the inappropriateness of its scale that makes Worldwide Plaza fail; the posture and dress of the 825 Eighth Avenue tower strike a note of Roman grandeur which even that voluptuary of the classic, Whitney Warren, architect of the façade of Grand Central Terminal, might have found too rich. When it came to dressing up buildings with pillars, cornices, modillions, and the like, Warren used to urge his young associates to "lay it on with a trowel," and unabashedly they did so. (High up on what is now called the Helmsley Building, straddling Park Avenue at Forty-seventh Street, immense pillars unaccountably emerge from the façade, supported on brackets but themselves supporting nothing.) S.O.M. has laid it on with a trowel at 825, in an elliptical two-story-high arcade that fills most of the ground floor of the tower and whose arches and vaulted ceilings, made of marble, granite, and precast concrete, are a proof of the infinite technical resourcefulness of computerized architecture. A few years ago, the detailing of this arcade would have required months of eye- and back-aching labor by draftsmen preparing drawings by hand; today, a well-programmed architectural computer can turn out exquisite, error-free drawings in a few seconds.

The highfalutin majesty of the arcade and the richness of the materials of which it is constructed are obviously intended to lend toniness to the building, and to help overcome what the rental agents for the Plaza must have regarded as the major obstacle confronting them: the bustling but drab environs of Eighth and Ninth Avenues. (Across Eighth Avenue is a rubbishy, ill-fenced parking lot; in the block to the north is a theatre, now shuttered, that was long a favorite venue for hard-core-pornographic gay movies.) The two major tenants in the tower—the advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather and the law firm of Cravath, Swain & Moore, each of which occupies thirteen floors—are accustomed to fashionable addresses. Now a client of Ogilvy or Cravath making his way for the first time through the carpeted, mahogany-panelled, and flower-bedecked quarters of either of these tenants can still be persuaded to steel himself for the receipt of bills calculated at Fifth Avenue rates.

As a machine for the manufacture of profits, Worldwide Plaza will no doubt give its owners many years of satisfaction, but as a specimen of architecture it is at once an immense and disconcerting toy and, though it affects an air of openness, a fortress. The fortress cast of mind which has dictated its design is symbolized by the presence, in the hours after sundown, of large numbers of chauffeured cars lined up along the curb outside 825, there to return employees safely to their homes at such times as public transport—to say nothing of travel on foot—is reckoned to be unsafe. (A reckoning not without foundation in this era of exceptional lawlessness, but the harsh facts are made still harsher by our becoming ever more acutely aware of them, to the point where we regard with suspicion even the safeguards that have been provided for us. At night, a well-kept, well-lighted subway stop in the basement of 825 is almost deserted and so becomes more dangerous than it would be if occupants of the building, daring to assume that the subway was safe, frequented it.)

In an earlier time, architects designed skyscrapers that could also have been described as immense toys—one thinks of the Woolworth Building, the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building—but we forgave the buildings their size and the injury they inflicted upon the fabric of the city (the overcrowding of streets, the loss of light and air) in part because they were a characteristically ingenious American novelty, which we were proud to possess, and in part because they were *not* fortresses. They seemed to belong to all of us: we were free to enter them, ascend to their pinnacles, and gaze out upon the wonders of the city. And, as New Yorkers, we shared our good fortune with millions of sightseers. But today few of our new towers grant the public access to observation decks at their tops. The decks of some of our older towers have even been usurped for other purposes: when the Rainbow Room at Rockefeller Center was

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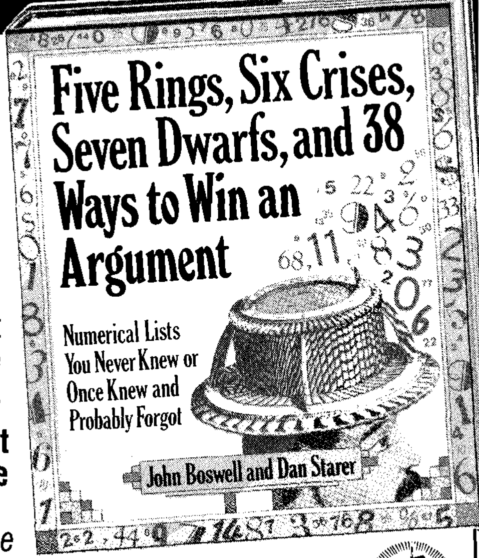
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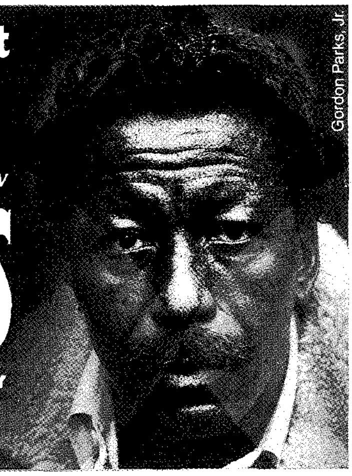
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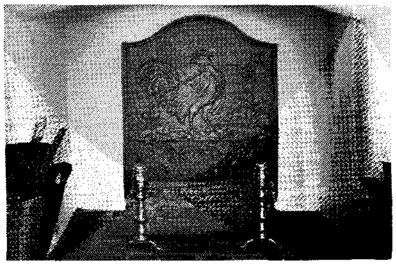

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remodelled a few years ago, the once popular observation deck was abandoned and part of it was given over to a new Rainbow Room bar. High and ample as the top of the 825 Eighth Avenue tower is, it will be familiar only to maintenance men, engaged from time to time in replacing the lights at the tip of its copper-and-glass pyramid.

IN one of the most celebrated of his poems Frost wrote, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by." Whenever I contemplate the professional acrobatics of the New York office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, these words come to my mind, for S.O.M. currently attempts what the narrator in the Frost poem would have liked to do but knew was impossible—that is, take two divergent roads at the same time. This undertaking must induce in the firm a mild form of that pathological condition in which an individual feels himself inhabited by multiple personalities. No matter how different the publicly asserted tastes of members of the firm may be, behind these tastes ought to lie convictions. Such convictions have, or ought to have, little to do with fashions in design, which are subject to incessant alteration, much of it seemingly irrational. In the old days, an architect felt no embarrassment at giving a client whatever the client wished in the way of the latest fashion. If, for example, the gifted and respected early-twentieth-century architect Welles Bosworth was asked to design a Tudor mansion one day and a Japanese bungalow the next, he would do so without hesitation; his intellectual respectability was not at stake. Today, an architect's intellectual respectability is at stake with every commission he accepts; the amiable self-indulgence of putting on or taking off a style ad lib is no longer permissible. The intransigent Bunshaft remains a highly visible and much admired presence in New York City, thanks to the large number of buildings from his hand that we possess; invisible but no less worthy of admiration are the particular principles that he embodied and defended. It took him a long time to win his Pritzker Prize, and his reputation for being "difficult" may have contributed to the delay. If so, one is tempted to say that in our time it is impossible to be a first-rate architect and *not* be considered difficult.

—BRENDAN GILL

# BOOKS

## *Reagan's Book*

IT is hard to imagine the person who would sit down and read Ronald Reagan's newly published autobiography. Those potential readers undeterred by Presidential memoirs as a genre would surely be daunted by riffling through the seven hundred and twenty-six pages of "An American Life" (Simon & Schuster; $24.95), for the book is stuffed, like an old trunk in the attic, with stacks of routine correspondence, bundles of old speeches, and page upon page of a diary recording the weather and the public events of the day. The text of the book includes blocks of recycled campaign rhetoric, scenes of Inauguration ceremonies, panoramic views of Washington from the air, descriptions of photo opportunities past, and accounts of those many occasions when the President choked up at the sound of "America the Beautiful" or "The Star-Spangled Banner." The book is a trip down memory lane—or it would be one if Reagan's memory were not so defective when it came to the various unpleasantnesses of his Presidency.

Presidential memoirs normally go through a sieve composed of researchers, ghostwriters, and editors, and this one is no exception. In the acknowledgments Reagan tells us that he had the help of a number of staff members, four editors at Simon & Schuster, and Robert Lindsey, a former *Times* reporter and the author of "The Falcon and the Snowman." All these people, however, proved unable to squeeze much more out of Reagan than that which he had already told us in his eight years as President. Nor did they manage to filter out all the detritus that accumulated in his memory bank over a much longer period. The book includes two quotations of the same imaginary Lenin text, a completely original history of the Bay of Pigs, and the fact that Reagan's favorite President, Calvin Coolidge, "came in after World War I." Reagan's helpers no doubt worked hard on the prose, and did their best to present him as he would like to see himself in the light of history. Yet, to their credit, they allowed Reagan's voice to come through: "I get a lump in my throat. . . . I goofed. . . . I didn't have much faith in Communists or put much stock in their word." And they have preserved the familiar logic:

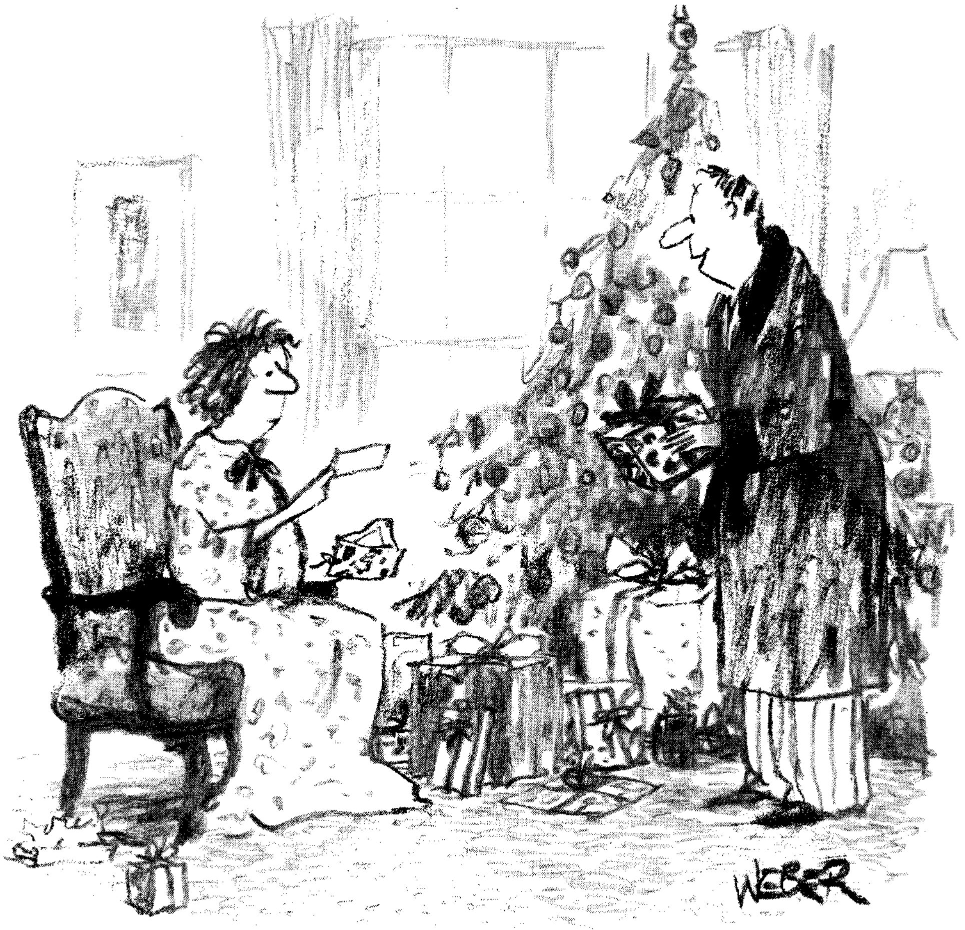
> To this day I still believe that the Iran initiative was *not* an effort to swap arms for hostages. . . . We had never had any contacts with the kidnappers.

And:

> Even now, I'm still annoyed at how my operation was reported. "The President has cancer," they wrote. In fact the President *had* cancer. Yes, doctors found an object in my body that was cancerous. But they removed it.

The result is that Reagan's autobiography reads much like a Beckett soliloquy—"Happy Days," perhaps, or "Krapp's Last Tape." With all its omissions, repetitions, longueurs, and digressions from the truth, it tells us a good deal about its principal character. And it reminds us that Reagan was quite unlike any President we had ever had before.

More a Presidential memoir than an autobiography, "An American Life" tells us relatively little about Reagan's first seventy years. His childhood and his career as an actor and as a spokesman for General Electric are covered in much greater detail in his 1965 memoir, "Where's the Rest of Me?" That book has long been out of print, possibly because of its unfortunate title—a line from one of Reagan's best films, and an allusion (though a negative one) to the sense of fulfillment he says he felt in leaving acting for politics and becoming something more than a "colored shadow on the screen." The new book recapitulates some of the earlier material: the scene of the eleven-year-old boy coming home to find his father stretched out on the porch in an alcoholic stupor; the ups and downs of the Reagan family fortunes and the numerous moves from town to town, and, through it all, the Christian forbearance of Reagan's long-suffering mother; college football; and Reagan's glide from sports



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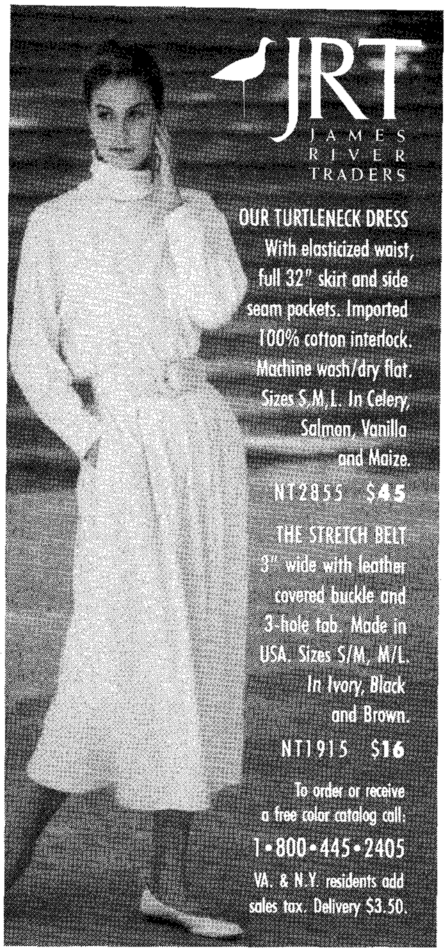
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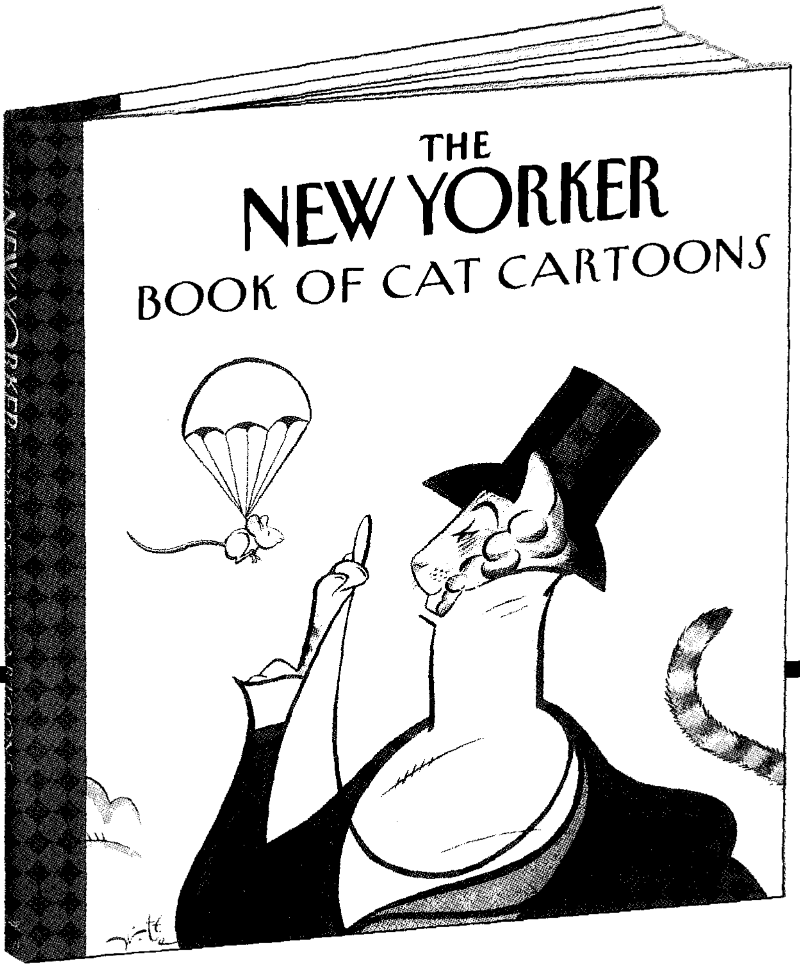
announcer to movie star. The most notable difference between the two books is that the first contains lively descriptions of people and the second does not. In the second, there is much more talk about God and His plan for mankind. In neither book, however, will the reader find more than a few sentences about Reagan's marriage to Jane Wyman, the subject having been doubly prohibited—first by Nancy and then by conservative politics.

In the five hundred pages devoted to the Reagan Presidency, the author addresses surprisingly few subjects. With respect to foreign policy, Reagan and his helpers have clearly made an effort to swing about the compass and to cover issues generally considered important, from United States–Soviet relations to the political crises in Haiti and the Philippines. Still, there are remarkable gaps. For example, the book discusses Reagan's trip to China in 1984, but while it describes the Great Wall and other tourist sites it fails to tell us anything about a China policy. Japan is mentioned only in relation to free trade, and there is no discussion of South Korea, Southeast Asia, India, or any part of Africa except Angola. Reagan remembers the Cuban intervention in Angola, but draws a blank on Namibia and the very existence of South Africa. Trips to Europe are recorded, and the Bitburg controversy is elucidated by comments from Reagan's diary such as "Helmut [Kohl] may very well have solved our problems re the Holocaust." But in this book Reagan never so much as alludes to the subjects over which so many words have been spilled in the Council on Foreign Relations: the Common Market and the prospective integration of Western Europe. Central America looms large in this book—far larger than Mexico and the rest of Latin America combined. Grenada looms so large that Reagan imagines, before the invasion, protesters warning that it will be "another Vietnam." Problems in the Middle East are discussed at length, some of them under the author's general heading of "items . . . popping up on my foreign policy plate." To read Reagan on foreign policy is to be reminded of one of those sixteenth-century navigational maps on which the known world is surrounded by large uncharted areas where angels blow trumpets and sea serpents rear out of the waves. "The Middle East," Reagan tells us near the beginning of a chapter, "was one of those remote but important stages of the world."

What is more surprising, at least in the context of the genre, is that Reagan has virtually nothing to say about any area of domestic policy apart from taxes, government spending, and the economy. Education is not discussed, though Reagan made it one of his issues in the 1984 campaign. The words "environment," "health," "labor," "transportation," and "civil rights" do not so much as appear in the index; the listing for entitlement programs has a note to "*see* also fraud and waste." Reagan, of course, campaigned against federal spending and federal intervention in many of these areas. All the same, it comes as something of a revelation that he had no interest whatever in most of the things the federal government does. This seems to be something more, or less, than an ideological proclivity, for Reagan also fails to mention the right-wing domestic-agenda items, such as abortion, tuition tax credits, and prayer in the schools. On the other hand, he says a great deal about money in all its various forms, from taxes and defense spending to subsidies and interest rates. It is on this subject that Reagan shows off his best Queen-of-Hearts logic. "Deficits . . . aren't caused by too little taxing, they are caused by too much spending," he explains. "Presidents don't create deficits, Congress does." As in the case of the arms sales to Iran, there is clearly no such thing as fungibility. Then, as proof of his contention that his tax measures did not create a windfall for the rich, Reagan offers the fact that the rich were paying a third more of the total tax revenue by 1987 than they had been in 1981—even though their tax rates had declined.

These baroque arguments notwithstanding, Reagan had an extremely clear idea of what he wanted to do. By drastically reducing taxes and drastically increasing defense spending, he would, he tells us, liberate capitalism at home and roll back Communism abroad. These two goals were for him directly related. He writes, "The great dynamic success of capitalism had given us a powerful weapon in our battle against Communism—*money*. The Russians could never win the arms race; we could outspend them forever." Money, in other words, was the lever that would move the world, and beside it nothing else mattered—not domestic justice, not foreign policy, and not even military strategy. Others might concern themselves with those things, but the President's job was to reduce taxes and increase defense spending. From the simplicity of this idea came the strength of the Reagan Presidency. For at least six years, Reagan pursued these goals with tenacity and single-mindedness, moving mountains of money from one part of the economy into another and leaving the holes. That was his achievement, and it will be his enduring legacy. The rest was largely a matter of appearances.

"AN AMERICAN LIFE" does not discuss Reagan's famous management style in any detail, but, as one reviewer has remarked, the book is obviously an attempt to refute what Reagan's White House handlers—Michael Deaver, Donald Regan, and others—have written about his passivity and his disengagement. The verbs are all active: "I thought . . . I told them . . . I made my decision on the SALT II matter." Reagan is pictured in the thick of things, keeping day-by-day watch on the war in Lebanon, telling his military chiefs to pursue Colonel Muammar Qaddafi's airplanes "all the way into the hangar." But the attempt, though valiant, does not succeed, for Reagan simply has no idea what Presidents normally do. Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon portray themselves in their memoirs—quite characteristically—as demanding reports, dictating action memos, weighing options, arm-twisting, browbeating, hiring and firing. There is none of that here. Reagan never describes himself as taking an initiative. At the famous luncheon at which he was said to have "taken David Stockman to the woodshed" for telling a reporter about the flaws in the 1981 economic plan, Reagan, by his own description, was eating his lunch quite peacefully while Stockman sat there unable to touch his. In the whole book, he makes only four phone calls to foreign leaders, and one of them is the call that Deaver, in his book, tells us that he persuaded the President to make to Menachem Begin, of Israel, urging Begin to stop the bombing and shelling of Beirut, in 1982. Otherwise, Reagan presents himself as attending meetings,



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writing letters, and working on his speeches. His diary shows him as an interested observer of the passing scene. His entries for September 27 and 28, 1982, when American marines landed in Beirut after the assassination of President-elect Bashir Gemayel, show that he spent a day and a half doing "homework" for a press conference on that event. In this book, Reagan consistently uses the word "homework" to refer to the reading he does on the issues. It is not a word one can imagine any other President using, for, while it implies sweet modesty, it signifies dissociation. What Reagan is saying is that studying the issues is not really his work but the work that others expect of him. Therefore, when he writes "I made my decision" the phrase must be understood as a figure of speech: Reagan ratified the decisions that were brought to him.

In his diary Reagan gently complains about the hours he puts in as President: "A day without a break. . . . The call this morning was at 6:45 A.M. . . . I hate Mondays." In retrospect, he tells us quite frankly, "The days I hated most were those with nonstop meetings. . . . The days I liked best were those Fridays when I could break away a little early, about three or three thirty, and take off for Camp David." Sometimes, being President was sheer drudgery—yet the job had its compensations. Reagan tells us that he loved living in the White House. For years, he had had a recurrent dream of standing in a big old house with high ceilings and balconies—a house up for sale at a bargain. Now his dream had come true. Quoting a talk he gave to some children, Reagan tells us that he liked having his "hand on the throttle" and liked battling with Congress, but that the most fun was "being able to pick up a phone, after we'd received a letter from someone who had a problem, and telling someone on the staff, 'Fix this.' " Then, too, he reports, he loved the ceremonial aspects of his job: the parades, for example, where he could salute the troops with the flags flying and a choir singing "America the Beautiful."

Another thing that apparently gave him great pleasure was his association with royalty, both British and Japanese. In this book Reagan describes visits with Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip far more vividly than he does encounters with his favorite political allies, Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Kohl. He gives detailed accounts of his visit to Windsor Castle and the Royal Couple's visit to his California ranch. He also recalls with delight the memorable evening at Buckingham Palace when, at the instigation of the Canadian Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, he recited the entire Robert Service ballad "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" to the Queen Mother, the rest of the Royal Family, and the assembled guests. (He acknowledges that he had had harsh words with Trudeau earlier that day, but he does not draw the obvious conclusion.) Possibly, Reagan identified with the Royals. Certainly he loved those aspects of his job which coincided with theirs. And often, so he writes, he felt like "a bird in a gilded cage"—that is, he experienced the isolation of royalty.

Initially, Reagan tells us that his sense of isolation came from the simple fact that he could not set foot outside the White House without a phalanx of Secret Service men. Later, however, he tells us that he did not even notice it when his Chief of Staff, Donald Regan, made the "presidential isolation" even more strict by trying to stop anyone else from seeing him alone in the Oval Office and by personally reviewing all the letters and documents to be sent in to him. Clearly, Reagan was not running the White House, much less the government. It did not even occur to him that he should be—nor does it in retrospect. His work, as he saw it, was representing the nation, or else the Administration—that is, performing the role he had auditioned for and won.

In his chapters on arms control Reagan includes long excerpts from eight of his speeches and from twenty-four letters exchanged between him and four Soviet General Secretaries. Since these large blocks of text add very little to the sum of public knowledge, an idle reader might suspect that they were put in to compensate for the lack of substance in this volume and to fill the number of pages required for a Presidential autobiography. But there is a much more alarming possibility—and there is some evidence for it. To read Reagan's diary excerpts is to see that his speeches are what he spent the most time on and cared about the most. Though he had speechwriters, of course, he took responsibility for his speeches, as he did not for the implementation of policy. This was natural. Reagan had been making speeches for a living since 1954, and to him governing was keeping up a perpetual campaign. To persuade the public to support the Administration and to maintain the Presidential standing in the polls—that was *his* work, and his contribution to the Presidency. The other activity he clearly thought to be his own was representing the Administration, or the nation, vis-à-vis its chief opponents. This, too, was a familiar task. Reagan had spent some years as president of the Screen Actors Guild; as President, he often spoke of the experience, and he prided himself on his negotiating skills.

For the first six years of Reagan's Presidency, his main interlocutor was Tip O'Neill. By the evidence of this book, the Speaker of the House was the only member of Congress he ever saw alone, and to Reagan he represented Congress, all of it. (The House and the Senate are not often differentiated in this book, nor are congressional Republicans and Democrats: there is "Congress" and there is Tip.) Reagan tells us that he had a personal liking for his fellow-Irishman. Though a bitter political opponent, O'Neill, too, enjoyed a good story and did not confuse politics with the rest of life. Until O'Neill retired, in 1986, the two septuagenarians would meet at fairly regular intervals and have at each other furiously, standards flying and armor clanking, until the match was called and they could relax and tell jokes. For Reagan, these meetings were the battles between the Administration and Congress.

For almost five years, Reagan had no meeting with his other opponent—the one whom he, as head of the Free World, considered his real match. For almost five years, he longed for it. "Starting with Brezhnev, I'd dreamed of personally going one-on-one with a Soviet leader," he writes. Reagan makes this kind of statement a number of times in his book, and it is not simply a matter of hindsight. A 1983 excerpt from his diary reads, "Found I was wishing I could do the negotiating with the Soviets. . . ." Elsewhere he writes, "I felt that if I could get in a room alone with one of the top Soviet leaders, there was a chance the two of us could make some progress." All other postwar Presidents had probably had a similar fantasy, but Reagan is surely the only one who, upon reflection, did not see it as such.

Just why a summit did not take place for five years is not made entirely clear in this book. At one point, Reagan tells us that he "wanted peace through strength, not peace through a piece of paper." Elsewhere, however, he blames the Soviets, denouncing their intransigence and their "bad acting" at some length, and pointing to the fact that the Soviet leaders kept dying off on him. Nevertheless, throughout this period Reagan wrote letter after letter, some of them in his own hand, to Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, Konstantin Chernenko, and Mikhail Gorbachev, and the Soviet leaders wrote back to him. The letters reproduced in this book do not substantiate Reagan's claim that Soviet intransigence blocked any progress in arms control. Being more or less ritual re-statements of American and Soviet positions, they do not prove much of anything. Yet to Reagan these letters are personal communications, with the significance of letters exchanged by eighteenth-century monarchs—though that is not quite the tone. On one letter from Brezhnev Reagan wrote marginalia such as "He has to be kidding" and "He's a barrel of laughs"—as if Brezhnev had stayed up late one night writing and, when everyone was asleep, sneaked out of the Kremlin to post a "Gotcha" letter to the American President. Reagan, for his part, worked hard over his letters, apparently in the belief that his arguments might actually sway his Soviet counterpart and change the relationship between the two superpowers.

Reagan finally got his wish for a one-on-one meeting with a Soviet General Secretary in Geneva in November of 1985. He recalls:

> As we shook hands for the first time, I had to admit—as Margaret Thatcher and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada predicted I would—that there was something likeable about Gorbachev. There was warmth in his face and his style, not the coldness bordering on hatred I'd seen in most senior Soviet officials I'd met until then.

Reagan describes having previously met only two senior Soviet officials: Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko,

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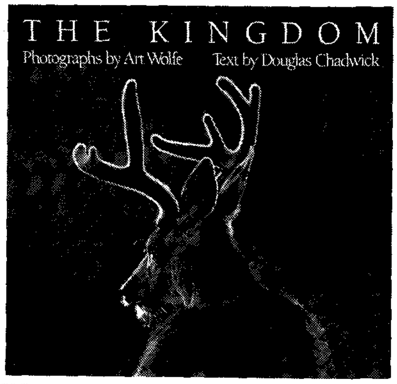

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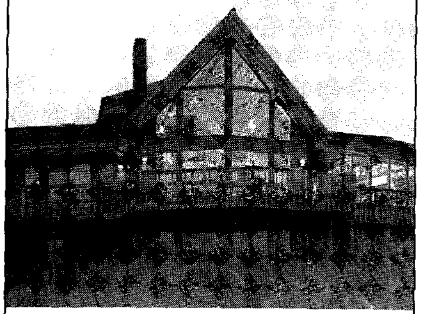

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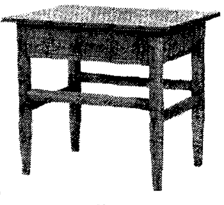

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who was a notorious cold fish, and Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin, whom he "couldn't help liking . . . as a human being." But no matter. Reagan found Gorbachev to be "an intelligent man and a good listener" who was "warm and outgoing in a social setting." When the two were left alone, Gorbachev asked Reagan about his Hollywood days, and the two conversed about "similar experiences dealing with our respective bureaucracies."

The only thing agreed upon in Geneva was that future summits should be held. Reagan takes credit for this achievement, because he invited Gorbachev to Washington while the two were walking alone; he popped the question then "because of a hunch that the time was right." Gorbachev not only accepted but also invited Reagan to Moscow. "When I told the members of our team that Gorbachev and I had already agreed to hold two more summits, they almost went through the ceiling in surprise," Reagan writes. Flying home from Geneva, Reagan, as he recalls, "felt good," because "after almost five years I'd finally met a Soviet leader I could talk to." The relationship continued, of course, and, looking back, Reagan writes, "It's clear that there was a chemistry between Gorbachev and me that produced something very close to a friendship."

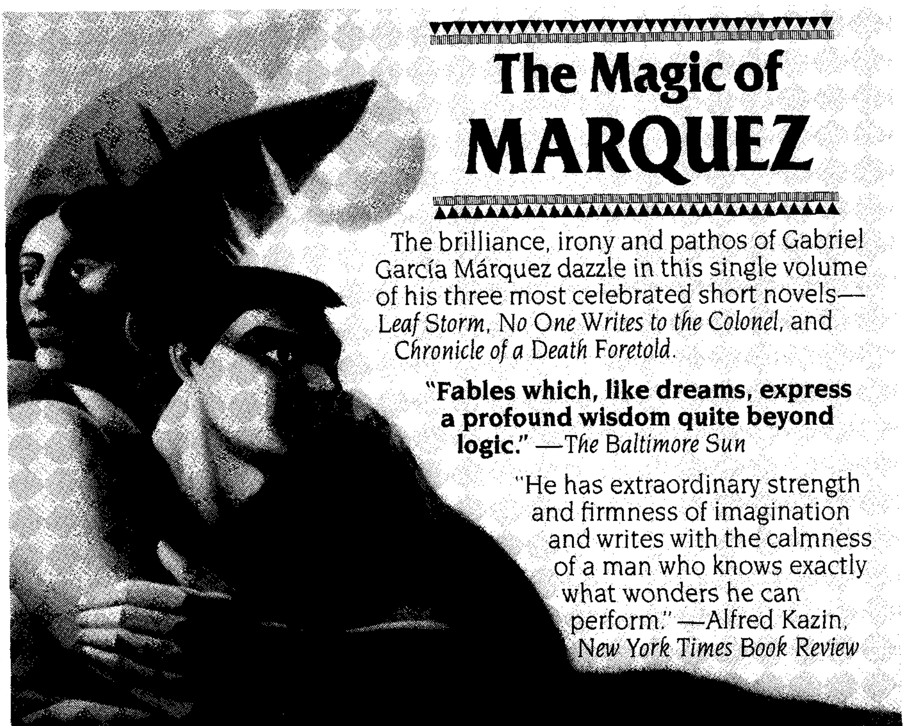
The Geneva summit led not to Washington or Moscow but to Reykjavík and to a public-relations disaster of the first order for Reagan and his advisers. On the first day, American and Soviet negotiators had—it later emerged—neared an agreement on a fifty-per-cent reduction in their strategic nuclear weapons. On the second, Reagan and Gorbachev battled over the Strategic Defense Initiative, and in the fray Reagan proposed the dismantling of all ballistic missiles and then accepted Gorbachev's proposal for the elimination of all nuclear weapons within the space of ten years. Reagan, however, refused to agree to Gorbachev's condition that research on S.D.I. be confined to the laboratories for the same period. The meeting broke up, and no agreement was reached. In the aftermath, Republican conservatives, among others, went into an uproar. How could *their* leader, the scourge of the Evil Empire, have turned into a peacenik appeaser, ready to dismantle the entire United States nuclear arsenal? Those who knew how impressionable Reagan was, and how slight his grip on nuclear strategy, supposed that he had become a victim of something like the Stockholm syndrome—a captive of Gorbachev's charm and his willingness to be bored for hours by Reagan's Hollywood stories. Reagan's memoir gives some evidence for this, but it offers far more evidence that this was not the case at all.

REAGAN undeniably viewed the world in terms of individuals rather than institutions. Hardly a speech of his did not contain a pointed story about an unsung American hero and some encomium to individual enterprise. But just because he saw the world in terms of individuals did not mean that he liked them. In fact, the most startling thing about this book is the absence of other people. For example, Reagan says almost nothing about his directors and producers in the White House, though some of them, such as Edwin Meese and Michael Deaver, had served him faithfully for two decades. He gives no thanks to his longtime political and financial backers, the members of his Kitchen Cabinet, without whom he would not have run for governor of California, much less President. Reagan tells us quite frankly that he has always had some difficulty remembering names and faces. The difficulty apparently ran to his Cabinet members and senior advisers, most of whom are not mentioned in this book, except as "our people" or "our team," and to George Bush, whom Reagan in his diary sometimes refers to as simply "VP." (This book at least revives the name of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Vessey, whose name Reagan could not identify in his deposition for the Iran-Contra trial of former national-security adviser John Poindexter.) The one Cabinet member Reagan has some words of praise for is Secretary of State George Shultz. Yet, it must be noted, he praises Shultz only at those junctures when Shultz threatens to resign. (Shultz told the Iran-Contra committees that he had threatened to resign three times—once in opposition to polygraph testing and twice because he thought White House aides were undermining his authority. Reagan, however, recalls five or six occasions on which Shultz tendered his resignation over matters of policy. That may be the only real piece of news in this book.)

Shultz, who had known Reagan for twenty years, clearly understood that a threat of resignation was one of the few ways to get the President's attention. Otherwise, Reagan might have remained wholly oblivious of Shultz's struggles with other members of the National Security Council. As it is, Reagan describes the all-out bloody war that went on between Shultz and Caspar Weinberger as "a little chill"—a healthy tension between his Secretaries of State and Defense.

Reagan had met very few foreign heads of state by the time he became President—he had travelled very little abroad. Others in his position might have been curious about such people as Anwar Sadat, François Mitterrand, and Deng Xiaoping, yet Reagan gives us nothing but stock phrases. His most extended personal comment on a friendly head of state is "I really like him." To judge by the amount of text devoted to them, the only foreign leaders who made any real impression on Reagan were Begin (with whom he had to argue over Lebanon) and Gorbachev. Yet his descriptions of both men might have come from briefing books, and neither in his diary nor in the text of this book does he recall a single thing they ever said to him informally. The one original remark he makes about Gorbachev is that in his ability to be "warm and outgoing in a social setting" the Soviet leader resembled Tip O'Neill.

No, what happened to Reagan at Reykjavík had very little to do with personal chemistry. Rather, it was the result of the slogan Reagan had adopted after it became clear that his Evil Empire rhetoric, combined with the huge increase in defense spending, had become a domestic political liability. In March of 1983, just two weeks after his final Evil Empire speech, Reagan gave his Star Wars speech, calling upon scientists to make nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete. Thereafter—to the dismay of most of his advisers—Reagan developed this theme, going on to speak about his hope for eliminating nuclear weapons from the face of the earth. That, of course, was the Soviet line: every General Secretary from Brezhnev to Gorbachev had used it in his speeches and had included it in his letters to Reagan, in full confidence that it would be ignored. Reagan, however, tended to believe what he said in his speeches. So when Gorbachev made



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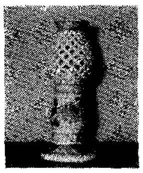

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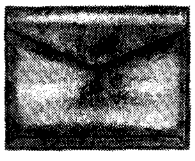

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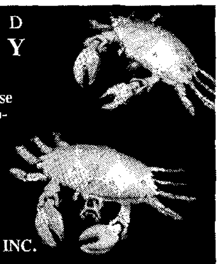

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his ritual proposal for the elimination of nuclear weapons at Reykjavík, Reagan seized upon it as his own.

In the uproar that followed, some of Reagan's advisers denied that the President had ever done such a thing, while others sought to counter the impression that the talks had come to naught. In this book Reagan has gone one better than his spin controllers by making up a completely new story about Reykjavík, in which he emerges as the hero and Gorbachev as the snake in the grass. According to Reagan, Gorbachev on the first day agreed in principle to the American proposal for the elimination of all ballistic missiles. The problem of nuclear missiles thus solved, Reagan on the second day brought Gorbachev close to an agreement on drastic reductions in conventional forces and tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. At that juncture, on the verge of "the most massive weapons reductions in history," Gorbachev turned to Reagan and, "with a smile on his face," said, "This all depends, of course, on you giving up S.D.I." Shocked, Reagan gradually realized that Gorbachev's one purpose in bringing him to Iceland was to kill S.D.I., and he broke off the talks.

The intrinsic problem with this story is that Reagan still does not seem to know that there is a difference between "ballistic missiles" and "nuclear missiles." The extrinsic problem is that a fairly complete account of the Reykjavík talks is now on record, and none of this occurred.

It's hard to imagine a President's fabricating the essence of a summit meeting when the facts are already public knowledge, but that is what Reagan has done. Conceivably, were the facts not so widely known, he might have rewritten the whole history of the Iran-Contra affair. As it is, he tells us that the Contras—as opposed to William Casey's Latin C.I.A. mercenaries—mined the ships in Nicaraguan harbors in 1984. He papers over his own role in raising secret funds for the Contras, and says he insisted that everything must be done legally—when, by the evidence of the Iran-Contra hearings, this was not a message his subordinates seem to have heard. Then, too, he casts doubt on the very existence of any diversion of funds from the Iran arms sales to the Contras. A lot, he says, remains unclear. He concludes by telling us that much that went on in the whole affair remains a mystery to him because Casey died and because Oliver North and Poindexter were so quickly removed from the White House by his advisers that he did not have the chance to ask them, man to man, what they were hiding from him. Reagan could, of course, have enlightened himself, or refreshed his memory, by reading the report of the Iran-Contra committees, in which the only major unknown is what Reagan knew. But, then, Reagan has always preferred his own stories to other people's and to what actually occurred.

It is this solipsism—not the isolation of stardom and the White House—that has kept Reagan "a bird in a gilded cage" for much of his life. The child of an alcoholic, he may have constructed his defenses against reality at an early age. Yet to read this book after reading his earlier memoir is to imagine that the construction has continued throughout his life. By now, his world seems to have become an empty mansion, much like the one in his dreams, in which he plays and reëdits the tapes of what he has already said. Possibly, Nancy lives there with him. He tells us that he loves her more than life and frets when she is away from him. He says, "In some ways Nancy and I are like one human being. . . . When one suffers, so does the other." The question is whether he sees Nancy as a separate human being or simply as some other part of himself. It is a difficult question to answer, for Reagan has to a degree made himself up as well. He pictures himself on horseback, strong and kindly and as resolute as a movie sheriff. Incapable of introspection, he cannot conceive of himself out of character; indeed, he denies his own body when it will not play the role. This book shows some of his human failings—his spitefulness, his propensity to blame others—yet, just as he will not acknowledge them, so it is always Nancy who shows spite, blames others, and, in general, does the dirty work for him.

It is possible to pity Reagan for not having been there while he lived his life—and for the occasional sensation he has that something is missing, or that he is nothing but a "colored shadow on the screen." But "An American Life" is hardly a tragedy. There have been many compensations. Reagan's limitless capacity for denial has given him great physical courage, the serenity of a Buddha, and the ability to act his part in front of audiences almost faultlessly for sixty years. He has managed to gild his cage, and he has managed to find a wife who would accept the role of shrew. What is more, he has for most of his life succeeded in convincing others—and, latterly, most of the American public—that he is exactly the man he imagines himself to be. "The key to understanding Ronald Reagan is to know that he has been underestimated all his life," Michael Deaver wrote. That is perfectly true. For twenty years, even Deaver did not hear the howl of the wind in the chimney; like most people, he did not see the emptiness of the man and his total lack of interest in the rest of us on this planet. —FRANCES FITZGERALD

## BRIEFLY NOTED

### FICTION

AMONGST WOMEN, by John McGahern (Viking; $17.95). This novel about a domineering Irish patriarch and his family manages to combine a masterly concision (less than two hundred pages) and a grand breadth of character and event. In rural County Roscommon, after the Second World War and before the arrival of television, Michael Moran is a pious, moody farmer whose permanent resentment carries echoes of his murderous youth as an I.R.A. guerrilla. He binds his three daughters and his second wife in a life of fearful devotion, but he drives his two sons and his only friend away. The author's lyrical descriptions of the satisfactions of farm work make the incidents of emotional violence all the more shocking, and he offers piercing, aphoristic insights into "the frail way that people assemble themselves." The reader will not soon forget the vision of Michael Moran, in the twilight of his failing power, "walking the fields like a man trying to see."

MY HARD BARGAIN, by Walter Kirn (Knopf; $18.95). The slenderness of this collection of stories and the inflated flap copy surrounding it ("breathing lessons in the heroic craft of getting on with it," "strapping moral tales") are equally misleading. The book, Mr. Kirn's first, is substantial and down to earth, and makes its mark with a natural modesty and avoidance of pretension. Most of the stories are set in the Mormon Midwest, and many deal with characters newly dislocated or disenfranchised: a farmer who has been put out of work by a pesticide accident; a farmer who has gone bankrupt and is travelling to New York to testify about his plight; a fourteen-year-old boy driving with his family from Wisconsin to Phoenix, where his dad hopes to start fresh. But the author never settles for the uninflected descriptions and empty silences that characterize so much fiction in this vein; there isn't a hint of the chic minimalism of the heartland. Instead, the stories are funny and inventive, and alert to the possibilities of the smallest moment or gesture.

### GENERAL

PROUST: A BIOGRAPHY, by Ronald Hayman (HarperCollins; $29.95). A commodious life of Marcel Proust (1871-1922), in every way graceful and perceptive. Mr. Hayman, by keeping his subject in sharp focus, and giving full attention to the sometimes bemusing minutiae of his existence (made possible by access to Proust's astoundingly voluminous correspondence), presents to us a remarkable—an almost incomprehensible—human being. We have a self-coddling mother's boy, of iron will and courage; a homosexual who celebrated in lyric prose the joys and griefs of heterosexual love; a skillful social climber who held in contempt much of the decaying aristocratic milieu in which he aspired to shine; a half-Jew who allowed himself to be accepted in the savagely anti-Semitic salons of Paris yet became a militant defender of Alfred Dreyfus; and, of course, a lifelong invalid who year after year fought off asthma, insomnia, heart disease, and a host of other ills to write his monumental novel. Mr. Hayman is always alive to the fact that Proust was above all an artist, and he makes good his contention that the novel is as much an act of creation as it is the recapturing of a past time. Photographs.

THE GREATEST-EVER BANK ROBBERY: THE COLLAPSE OF THE SAVINGS AND LOAN INDUSTRY, by Martin Mayer (Scribners; $22.50). This informative and disturbing work

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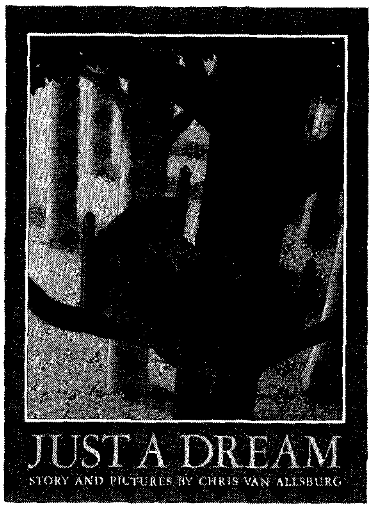
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starts off with a glossary defining America's assortment of depositories and the institutions (federal and state) that charter and supervise them. The author then explains that the soaring interest rates of the early nineteen-eighties threatened savings-and-loan associations—small, local businesses that financed housing—because the old mortgages they held paid them less than the rates they had to offer to retain depositors. Mr. Mayer reminds us that there were alternatives to unbridled deregulation, the solution the Reagan Administration chose. Deregulation attracted a new breed of entrepreneur—men who bought their way into S. & L.s, and, regarding deposit insurance as a guarantee of solvency no matter how foolish their investments, created a fiscal Chernobyl that will cost the nation the entire peace dividend throughout the nineteen-nineties. The author's gift for elucidation insures that the reader will understand exactly what happened, and why.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF PORGY AND BESS, by Hollis Alpert (Knopf; $35). This lovely book, the biography of a musical drama, gets in a lot of social history as well as literary, musical, and theatrical history. The novel "Porgy," by Dubose Heyward, was a critical and commercial success in 1925, and was remarkable for its time as a white writer's humane portrayal of blacks as individuals. Dramatized by Heyward's wife, Dorothy, "Porgy" was a Theatre Guild hit in 1927. Finally, with help from George Gershwin, Heyward fashioned the libretto and, in collaboration with Ira Gershwin, wrote the lyrics for "Porgy and Bess," which the Theatre Guild presented in 1935. The work's subsequent career traces the ever-widening acceptance of black performers: early productions found their casts in the segregated small time of show business; later casts have been university- and conservatory-trained singers of world rank. Mr. Alpert treats his own cast—performers, producers, directors, designers—with style, sympathy, and insight.

SOLIDARITY, SOLITUDE: ESSAYS, by Adam Zagajewski, translated from the Polish by Lillian Vallee (Ecco; $19.95). The author, a poet, went into exile in 1982, after the Polish government declared martial law and suppressed Solidarity, and has since lived in Paris and in Houston. These subtle, modest, and wise meditations were composed before Poland returned to democracy, but they do not seem dated; though they frequently refer to Polish writers and statesmen, they transcend times and places. For example, Mr. Zagajewski asks how, in resisting conformity imposed by the state or society, you resist the conformity that may be imposed by opposition. In discussing the search for individuality, he explores competing orthodoxies in contemporary art and philosophy, and scrutinizes concepts, such as "hierarchy," that have been misused in disputes over political power or artistic authority. His language (congratulations to the translator) is poetic, in the sense of perfect, not fancy.

REDISCOVERING AMERICA, by Roger G. Kennedy (Houghton Mifflin; $24.95). Mr. Kennedy, the director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, is one of the country's most untrammelled architectural historians, and he has given us a wide-ranging book about diverse curiosities and unsuspected wonders of the American past. The achievements of the aboriginal Mound Builders of Mississippi, the elegant Greek Revival in antebellum Southern architecture, the artistic conservatism of Thomas Jefferson, the Russian cultural imprint on Hawaii, the military sophistication of the Plains Indians—all are lighted up by Mr. Kennedy's enthusiastic and spirited prose. These essays provide a fresh look at every region of the country, and are generously illustrated by prints, drawings, and color photographs.

NOTE: "Cuba: A Journey," by Jac[illegible] Timerman, translated from the Spanish by Toby Talbot, has been published by Knopf ($18.95). Much of the text first appeared in *The New Yorker*.

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3. Workers using radioactive materials cannot be disposed of through normal housekeeping practices.—*Brochure on radiation safety published by Case Western Reserve University.*

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